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UNHOLY WAR
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BUST–A–GROOVE
B–MOVIE
and much more

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Formula One '98 Rules. OFFICIAL.

FORMULA 1 WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP

FORMULA 1 98

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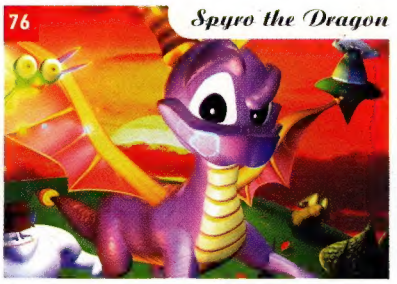
Welcome to the Station party



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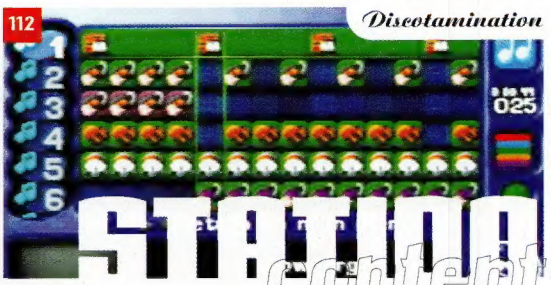

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This month's STATION Demos!

If you thought last month's Tomb Raider III and International Superstar Soccer '98 exclusives were something special, then in the words of the great Bachman, Turner Overdrive – "You ain't seen nothin' yet!"

This issue we've secured playable demos of Oddworld Inhabitants' latest instalment in the superb Abe's saga, Abe's Exoddus, plus a classic playable demo of the first game in the series, Abe's Oddysee.

We've also managed to bring you exclusive playable and rolling demos of B-Movie. A superb ode to 1950's sci-fi cinema developed by the oddly named King Of The Jungle (check out the review on page 80).

Add to this a playable demo packed with futuristic sports action on the blood-filled Dead Ball Zone, and I'm sure you'll agree there are hours of fun here for everybody.

Great second disc? You bet, but just wait until next month!

STATION 2

Abe's Exoddus

Abe's Oddysee

B-Movie

B-Movie - Video

Dead Ball Zone

DISC BREAKDOWN

Abe's Exoddus

The most unlikely hero returns in an adventure of massive proportions. After saving his compatriots in Abe's Oddysee, Abe is again drafted in to save the Mudokon race. Platform puzzling is the order of the day, and this demo gives you a taste of what's in store for Abe as he attempts to once again defeat the Glukkons in his own inimitable style.

Abe's Oddysee

Last year's surprise hit from the Oddworld Inhabitants looks every bit as good today as it did when it was originally released. It plays just as well too, which is why we've decided to give you most of the first level to try your hand at it. Can you handle the devious platform puzzle action, though?

B-Movie

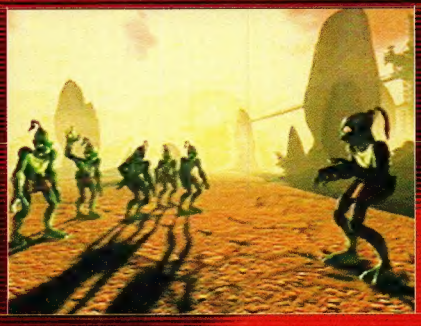
Ed Wood is alive and working in London! Hammersmith-based developers King Of The Jungle offer tribute to the sci-fi movies of old with their B-Movie inspired, uh... B-Movie. Station gives you the opportunity to read the review, watch the expansive rolling demo then take the reigns in our exclusive playable demo. Where else can you get such service?

B-Movie - Video

As a little bonus this month, we've included a brief rolling mini-demo on the front end of the B-Movie playable demo. Just let the game load up and leave it alone for a few minutes and you'll get a short Martian blasting auto sequence. Not the most spectacular piece of promo video you'll ever see, but there for you never the less.

Dead Ball Zone

Speedball 2 goes 3D. Not officially of course, but once you've played Dead Ball Zone you'll know exactly what we're talking about. This demo gives you the opportunity to experience classic future sports in a PlayStation style. We've a time-limited one or two-player game for you to get your teeth into. Just watch out for that kick in the knackers !



Turn to page 128 to find out how to get the most out of your exclusive cover CD.

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HOTTER THAN HELL!

It seems that while some publications get things the wrong way around by 'selling out' between their covers, we just can't help selling out at the news stands. The response from everybody to Issue One has been massive, and as you can probably tell from my smug expression, things just keep on getting better and better.

I'm pleased to say that STATION magazine has proved to be such a resounding success that next month we will be producing almost twice as many copies of the 'most feared PlayStation magazine in the world' just to ensure that nobody will be disappointed at not being able to get their hands on the Christmas edition of the UK's leading and most proudly unofficial PlayStation magazine. It is due to be our biggest selling edition yet, guaranteed! And if you wonder how I can be so confident, turn to page 126 to see what we've got in store for you next month. You won't believe your eyes!

This issue we had hoped to be bringing you the World Exclusive review and demo of Thrill Kill, but since Issue One yet another games industry legend has bitten the dust. What with the sell-out of the majority of their titles to Electronic Arts, Virgin seem to be in a state of disarray. As a result, the future of the shockingly awesome Thrill Kill sat in the balance for a while before EA decided to drop it as it did not fit into their corporate profile. Banished to videogames hell? I hope not.

Never mind, in its place we've beaten off all competition to bring you the world's first review of Gremlin's superb Actua Soccer 3, which we'll follow up next month with the exclusive playable demo. We've also got previews of Fifa '99, Viva Football and World League Soccer '99 in what is a very football-heavy month for Sony's console. Add to this a four page Final Fantasy VIII preview, more news and shots of Ridge Racer 4 and reviews of F1 '98 and Abe's Exoddus, and it's clear that this is an issue that is practically on fire!

As for the disc, I'm sure you're going to enjoy freeing the Muddokons with our covermounted playable demo of the brilliant Abe's Exoddus, and saving the earth on the sci-fi stunner – B-Movie. Add to this the futuristic sports action of Dead Ball Zone, the classic Abe's Odyssee and a never before seen mini-promo reel of B-Movie and it's clear to see why STATION is unstoppable.

So read, play, enjoy.
I'll see you back here one month from now.

Dave Perry – Firestarter

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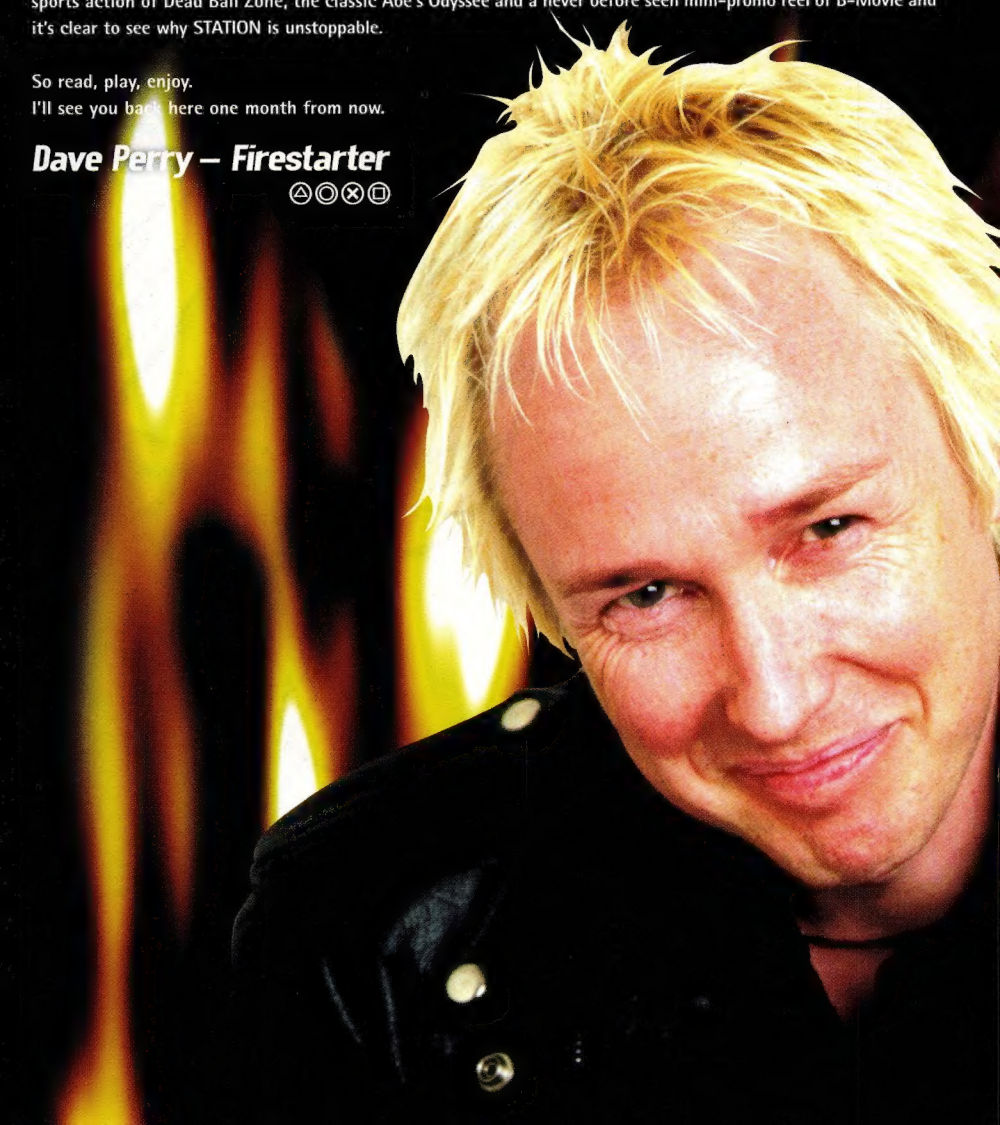


OOH AAH ACTUA!

OOH AAH ACTUA!

Actua Soccer 3

Publisher: Gremlin

Developer: Actua Sports

Release Date: 20 th November

Game Type: Sports Sim

No of Players: 1–8

Price: £39.99

Actua Sports have been producing sports titles for Gremlin since the PlayStation was first launched. From football and golf, to tennis and ice hockey, quality has been a trademark with each game they have been involved with. Back in January 1995, Gremlin became the first European games company to purchase a motion capture unit, and since then their sports series has never looked back. Consistent performances with their soccer and golf titles, improving with every instalment, have proudly established the team as a big player in the sports market. Their innovation and techniques have set standards for others to work to, and as they continue to provide us with such good quality software, there seems to be no reason why they shouldn't continue to be held in such high regard. A large part of the Actua phenomenon are Peter Aliss and Barry Davies, both respected commentators in their field, who have continued to work closely with the award winning team. The results are clearly visible with some outstanding products, ensuring the future stays bright upon each and every release. With the much-awaited Actua Tennis due for release soon, a market largely unexplored on the PlayStation, there seems to be no stopping the snowballing success of the Actua series. As long as they continue to produce software like Actua Soccer 3, and maintain the standards they keep setting for themselves, who can deny them that praise? Long may it live on.

ACTUA SOCCER 3

AS THE LATEST CROP OF FOOTBALL GAMES FILTER ONTO THE MARKET, GREMLIN APPEAR TO HAVE ACQUIRED THEIR GREATEST CHALLENGER TO FIFA'S CROWN SO FAR. FOLLOWING A LONG LINE OF SUCCESSFUL ACTUA SOCCER TITLES, NUMBER THREE LOOKS LIKELY TO GO TO NUMBER ONE.

STATION TRIPLE A TITLE

UNLESS YOU ARE BLIND OR BLATANTLY IGNORANT, recent weeks have provided conclusive evidence of football as a sport gradually transforming into big-business. With a certain media mogul attempting to buy arguably the biggest club in the world, and with the general over-inflation of transfer values, it would be unfair to condemn a true football fan for voicing concerns about their beloved game. There have been many opinions and suggestions as to the motives of such lucrative take-over deals, yet the argument that it will ruin the sport, is at present, largely unfounded.

Man Utd seem to be the club receiving the greatest media coverage amidst these take-overs, quite ironic in the circumstances, and most of the concern is being projected from their own corner, rather than from other sectors of the footballing community. Ask the fans of clubs that survive on shoestring budgets, the likes of Leicester and Wimbledon, and they

would probably consider a £673m windfall as something of a blessing. A cash injection to strengthen their squads with recognised footballing talent would undoubtedly interest the respective managers, Joe Kinnear and Martin O' Neil, as well. With speculation rife, and with nobody wholly qualified enough to predict the outcome of such a move, there is surely no reason for us to become stricken with fear for the future of our game just yet - after all, the sport of football is bigger than any one man.

It's comforting to see however, that the monetary wranglings going on at present do not seem to have halted the flow of soccer software that is still flooding from the development offices. After the World Cup in France this summer and the wealth of quality football simulations it inspired, the expectations for the genre to reduce in production rate appear to have been misleading. Konami have given us their sequel to the ever-popular *ISS Pro* with an updated '98 version, and whilst the EA contingent are due to release a '99 account of *FIFA*, the Actua Sports team have revealed their vastly improved third incarnation of Actua Soccer - aptly titled, Actua Soccer 3. Whilst we might be a little apprehensive about the forthcoming changes to our beautiful game, there are no such fears for the videogame sector. Exciting times for every videogame football fan are once again upon us.

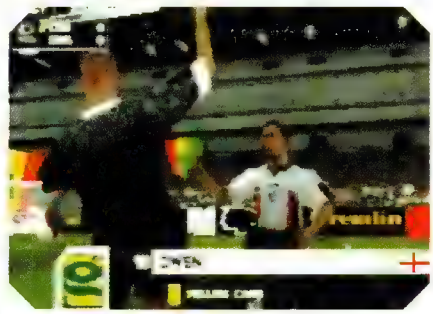
UP FOR THE CUP

Since the PlayStation first appeared, football software has been the subject of strong competition. The Actua Soccer series has headed into direct confrontation with the *FIFA* games over and over again for the 32bit soccer crown, and now, a three way battle royal has been established with Konami's successful *ISS* series also joining the fray. Year after year, updated, improved and substantially better versions of these games are released, with each title continuing to offer both good and bad elements as we strive to find the ultimate football game. With almost every living footballer and a wealth of big name licences included, the EA Sports games cater for most, and arguably hold the top game title right now, but it does seem to lack the passion and commitment commonly associated

First Ten Minutes

This looks so much better than the previous Actua Soccer title. Smoother animation and improved commentary, but still a lack of on-the-ball skill moves. The amount of teams available is staggering, from Brazil to Macclesfield, this definitely has depth. All authentic players and strips... this is a real beauty.

Compatibility



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: **Replays once again give you every possible angle to view your glorious moments of triumph; The lower division matches, as we're all aware, are not always the prettiest of spectacles; As players line up in a wall to defend a free kick, you will see them all jump in unison to give extra height; A young Michael Owen feels the wrath of the referee. He may be an exceptional talent, but he's not above the law; A very uncharacteristic feature of the English support – a half empty Wembley. Those who stayed away missed a Shearer special.**

OOH AAH ACTUA!

with football in general. At the opposite end of the spectrum, the *ISS* games capture the pace and playing experience, yet fall down on their faces a little with hideous player names and fictitious surroundings. The Actua Soccer chain, in recent times though, have managed to recreate the excitement of football and combine it with real players and added authenticity. Unfortunately, they have always been flawed by shallow game options and a distinct lack of teams to play with, and the results of this have seen Gremlin's games falling well down the pecking order, behind both *FIFA* and *ISS* in the popularity stakes. This time around though, giant strides have been made. All that was missing before has been included, everything that was worth retaining has been revised and updated, and a general overhaul has provided an altogether new-look Actua game.

Scheduled for a November release date, Actua Soccer 3 is by far the most ambitious project the Actua Sports team have undertaken with their soccer series. Sound, commentary, graphics, presentation, the whole package has been improved. Once again, superstar England striker Alan Shearer has been used to promote the game and the return of the irrepressible Barry Davies, arguably the greatest commentator to grace a Sony disc, makes a welcome, and much more involved, return. Players on the

A BITING MOMENT

The opening sequence of Actua 3 is, without doubt, the most stirring you'll ever witness on the PlayStation. A warmth will fill your insides and don't be surprised to find a tear welling in the eye... Ahh, don't you just love football?

pitch have also been greatly improved, with an advanced AI to make the action even more realistic. The greatest feature by far, though, is the amount of teams and competitions for you to play with. With over 450 different teams, spanning every corner of the globe, and featuring a staggering 25 different leagues, variety is definitely well catered for. In fact, Actua Soccer 3 has emerged as a real contender for the top footie sim crown.

BALLS TO THE OTHERS

In comparison, the previous Actua games look sub-standard and amateur to the third version. A full graphic overhaul has made this a far better visual experience. Each player has over 500 polygons making up their identity and over 60 different heads are used throughout, including ten individual ones to represent some of the top stars. As well as this, stadium graphics are also a pleasure to view. Real time lighting and shadow casting in each individual arena make for a realistic impression, and this all takes place within thirty actual stadia. Each one is replicated in detail to their real life counterparts. Old Trafford, Barcelona's Nou Camp and even the infamous Wembley all make appearances, with many others from around the world as well. To compliment the amount of effort that has already been applied, authentic players with individual ratings and attributes also appear. Each one of the ten thousand has been

A HISTORY OF ACTUA SOCCER

ACTUA SOCCER

Released toward the end of 1996, Actua Soccer was one of the first memorable pieces of football simulation to appear on the PlayStation. Capturing the familiar tones of Barry Davies and using the experienced limbs of ex-England internationals Chris Woods and Andy Sinton for the motion capture, Actua Soccer was, at the time, touted as a revolutionary action football sim. There were 44 international teams to play with and a variety of cups and leagues to play in. It was a great game when it was first released, sadly looking a little dated now, though.

ACTUA SOCCER - CLUB EDITION

How did they get away with this one? The 'Club Edition' was no more than Actua Soccer in a domestic form - with less teams to play with! There were twenty clubs from the Premiership to choose from, and each of the players and team strip were authentic replicas. Barry Davies had a new commentary and there wasn't (and still isn't) a football game that catered for the domestic scene, but this was a big disappointment. As the great Barry Davies would say, "they should have done better than that."

ACTUA SOCCER 2

Oh what great joy! About this time last year saw the release of Actua Sports' best title yet. Actua Soccer 2 eclipsed the previous rendition and immediately threw down a challenge to the EA Sports team. The introduction of Alan Shearer to promote the game, and a motion capture line up with himself and the relatively unknown youngster at the time, Michael Owen, convinced everybody of the growing confidence within Actua Sports. Barry Davies had a partner in the form of TV pundit Trevor Brooking, and the whole game seemed so far in advance of anything they had achieved before. This was a great game! Shearer even selected his own allstars team, giving you the ability to play with the likes of Pele, Platini and even Kenny Dalglish. Unfortunately, the release of Actua Soccer 2 coincided with that of EA's Road to the World Cup, their best effort so far, and subsequently didn't receive the recognition it deserved. Still, a great game anyway.

THE MAN WHO CREATED ACTUA

Forget the high-profile endorsements and carefully planned publicity exercises, the real people behind Gremlin's award winning Actua series tend to stay out of the limelight. Whilst you are marvelling at their latest game, they are probably already playtesting the follow-up. Station magazine interrogated Actua Sports creative director, Pat Phelan, about the features, motives and ambition behind their latest blockbuster, Actua Soccer 3.

S: Motion capture is becoming one of the most important issues in the development of sports software these days, who was used to do what and how has it progressed from the last Actua Soccer game?

PP: We have 'upped the ante' considerably with Actua Soccer 3. In the past we've usually been allocated an afternoon with a megastar and have tried to get as many captures done as possible. This year we enlisted the help of Sheffield United. This was fantastic news – and not just because I'm a life-long fan – because we got far, far longer with the players than ever before. Club captain David Holdsworth did the bulk of the captures.

S: Despite some of the bad press he has received in the past months, how important was the re-signing of Alan Shearer? Is he as grouchy as the tabloids make him out to be?

PP: He's a nice guy and he is also very funny. (Let's not forget he is after all, just a human being). Our PR guy Steve McKevitt still drones on about the time he beat Shearer at Actua Soccer 2. He didn't re-sign either, the original deal we struck with him was for four years. Shearer's a brilliant player but as England captain his popularity is bound to fluctuate with the success of the England team.

S: Graphically, the Actua Soccer series is progressing with each instalment. What other areas of the game are you hoping to substantially improve?

PP: The graphics in this one are better than ever. AS3 uses a completely new engine with fully meshed players and 30% more polys per player. All stadia are accurately detailed and feature things like flares, thrown toilet rolls and waving flags. Intelligence and reactions, more air-play, a completely new control system... I could go on, but essentially you should see this as a completely new game.

S: He is by far the greatest commentator on British TV, has there been any difficulty in keeping Barry Davies with the Actua Sports team? Have other companies tried to prise him from you?

PP: Other companies are always trying to prise stuff away from us, commentators, game ideas, motion capture techniques – I guess that comes with innovating rather than emulating. Barry is an absolute dream to work with, and we give him plenty of room to just be himself. Barry is synonymous with Actua Soccer and we're all very happy to keep it that way.

FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: The grid at the foot of the picture which denotes where you and your opponents are on the field is common in football games these days... Does anyone use them though? Playing colours have been replicated in fine detail. All 450 teams have authentic home and away versions; Injuries can come in various forms in AS3. Broken legs, thigh strains and even nose bleeds could force the manager into an unwelcome substitution.

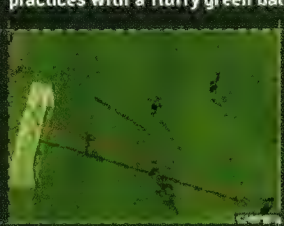
researched to match their real life models, from the headline-making big-earners to the part timers that make up the roots at football's ground level. A custom feature has also been applied. This particular element of Actua Soccer 3 allows you to construct your own fantasy league, complete with fantasy players, or just edit in your own name and select yourself up-front with the strike force of your local team. The possibilities are seemingly endless.

ON ME 'EAD, SON

Actua Soccer 3 plays more or less like the others in the series. The same button configurations and shooting system have both been kept in, but the overall play is a far better experience. The artificial intelligence that has been added to the players has made the whole game play more like a real football match. Those of you who are familiar with former Actua Soccer titles will recall the CPU players having ridiculous ball sense, and those that you were in control of being equally

TRAIN TIMETABLE

Featuring once again, as it did in Actua Soccer 2, the training ground is where your team bonds as a unit and practices with a fluffy green ball. Expect to see fluorescent bibs a-plenty and a heavy dosage of leafy scenery.



S: Why do you think nobody has produced a game solely based on our very own Premier league, surely there is a market out their for domestic football?

PP: Yeah, people want to play our own Premier League. AS3 lets you – but, I think its important to give the people out there choice, people will want to experiment. As a Sheffield United fan this is the first game that gives me the opportunity to play as a Blade. I think I can safely say it's the only one for Man City fans as well!

S: After producing three previous Actua Soccer titles, where do you get the motivation and the drive to do another one? What are you striving for?

PP: Ideas never dry up, we've already finished designing our next two soccer games. We know exactly where we're going with the whole Actua Soccer series. We are striving to please our fans and ultimately create the game we've always wanted to play.

S: Apart from further additions to the Actua Golf and Ice Hockey series, are the team delving into any sports that they have not previously covered, such as rugby or darts, perhaps?

PP: We are keen to absorb more sports into the ACTUA range. I think you can pretty much take it as red that we are waving the ACTUA wand over a number of sports at this time. ACTUA darts... mmmm. ACTUA beer drinking... ACTUA fat bellies... possibilities.

S: Why will Actua Soccer be the greatest football game ever on the PlayStation? How do you think it will perform against the likes of ISS '98 and the next FIFA instalment? Why should people choose your product ahead of the others mentioned?

PP: The million dollar question. Well, I know the correct marketing spiel type answer – but in all honesty we don't give a damn if people choose FIFA or ISS over ACTUA. All we want is to play the perfect football game, if that means we have to write it too – so be it.

S: When and who founded the Actua Sports company and to what can you attribute its meteoric rise to success?

PP: Actua was a title we came up with after considering Sega's VIRTUA. But we thought VIRTUA was like Virtual, not real. We wanted something that reflected the realism involved in our games – real as is in ACTUA(L). Simple. The success of the Actua series is completely down to the efforts of the teams involved and their commitment and dedication to reproducing their favourite sport on the 'small' screen. It's important that each team-member is a die-hard fan of the sport they are responsible for emulating.

S: Thanks Pat.

FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: Though most of the stadia are authentically replicated, just look at Highbury for example. The city they're situated in seems somewhat fictional... Arsenal, in New York! The Actua Sports team have gone for realism above anything else this time around, even down to half-empty stadiums; The realism of Actua is again in evidence. Darren Anderton in his most familiar position – Bent over, hands on thighs and breathing heavily.

difficult to handle. More often than not the players would change direction and immediately sprint, thus leaving you with limited control and a frustrating gaming experience. Not any more! The control method implemented is far more user-friendly and easier to come to terms with. Intricate passing moves, again missing from those other titles, can now be performed at will. Tackling and stealing the ball is also a simpler task, yet not so easy as to detract from the challenging gameplay in any way. This is an all-round good piece of footballing software.

The most exciting feature of Actua 3, by a long way, is the amount of teams and tournaments you can play with. From Juventus in Serie A of the Italian league to Brighton and Hove Albion in England's Nationwide division three, they're all here. There are 450 in all, and Barry Davies crows out as many names as he can. In his own excitable way, the commentator is once again exceptional. His passionate vocals that create such wonderful atmosphere are again exploited brilliantly, even without the mumblings of former sidekick, Trevor Brooking, working in tandem.

To say that the overall improvements to the Actua Soccer series have made this a far better title is an understatement. It is without question a superior package to the Actuas that have preceded it by a long way. It is a lot more appealing to play, and much nicer to look at. There are so many teams and options that it will take you another year to go through them all. Without question, this could definitely claim to be the biggest football game on the market at present, it has certainly upstaged the highly touted *ISS Pro '98*. If you, like most of us, are looking for the ultimate football game, every avenue needs to be explored. None of the big companies have succeeded so far, but with Actua Soccer 3, the Gremlin team are getting closer.

When the media tycoons finally buy up all of the top flight football clubs, who knows which direction the sport will end up heading. The consoling thought is that with quality developers and such healthy competition on the PlayStation, football will always be well represented in a videogame form.

The Competition

ISS '98 –
The Konami sequel is among the best football games around at present. What it lacks in authenticity is made up considerably in the playing.

World Cup '98 –
Probably the best all-round football software available on the PlayStation.

Three Lions –
Having no running commentary it loses the atmosphere football is based on, but a shot-targeting system gives rise to some spectacular goalscoring moments.

STATION

Easily the best Actua Soccer to date. A real competitive challenge to EA's FIFA.

\+ There are so many teams to play with!
\+ Arguably the best commentator in the business
\- Limited amount of skill moves
\- No Football Conference!

OUT OF 100

90

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WHAT'S MORE, WE'LL SEND YOU ONE OF THE FOUR CLASSIC GAMES ON THIS PAGE ABSOLUTELY FREE!

See the pull-out form inserted in this magazine.

Noticed how all the big games seem to be sequels these days? Ever crave for somebody to do something completely original for a change? We do. STATION magazine discovered that Jon Hare, founder of Sensible Software, has some very strong views on the lack of original software available today and why.

SEND IN THE CLONES

It is now virtually impossible to sell a truly original games idea to a publisher. There are many reasons for this and nearly all are linked to spiralling and uncontrolled incompatible hardware development and the increasing influence of big budget marketing on the current games environment. Development is horribly expensive, generally reckoned to be around half a million pounds for a standard game title. This can usually be doubled for totally original games as they always take a lot more R&D time and most of it is spent on staff who are getting to grips with a lot of new equipment and tools which they have only just received to make a new game for the latest platform. Original game design typically takes about two years, and the technical goal posts always seem to move whilst you are developing. All of this means the publisher wants to know that he is investing his money in a relatively safe game. Consequently, games are currently being canned at a n alarming rate with very few new games being signed up to completion. The games that are getting financed to completion tend to either be clones of previously successful games, i.e. Quake, Tomb Raider 2, Fighting Games etc. or Games with big licenses attached, X Files, FIFA etc. this is for several reasons.

First Reason – a derivative or licensed game is easier for a marketeer to understand and is therefore easier for him to sell to the guy in Smiths who used to be buying Fruit and Veg for Asda six months ago. The ignorance of the buyers at retail level is appaling and so it is important to be able to offer them strong titles that they can instantly relate to and associate with success.

Second Reason – truly original games are always slower and more expensive to develop, the speed element is a particular problem for licenses or machines with a limited shelf life.

Third Reason – truly original games cannot be converted to other machines until they are nearly finished as the conversion developer cannot really see the overall picture of the game until it is nearly finished, this is far less of a problem with derivative titles as the benchmark for the conversion has already largely been set by the game which is being ripped off. Releasing multiple versions of a game at once is of massive benefit to the publisher, not least because it maximises the use of the marketing budget allocated to the title as well as giving the title an overall stronger presence in the charts.

Fourth Reason – Most publishers are big businesses now, not small affairs like they used to be six years ago, and the quicker shareholders can see return on the money invested by the company, the happier they are going to be.

As previously stated truly original development will by definition take longer to finish off, generally a bit of a no no unless it's a guaranteed huge seller, and unfortunately games with big licenses attached or sequels to a previously successful game have got much more of a guarantee attached to them than an original game that no-one really quite understands yet. Oh well never mind, the truth is as soon as development costs come down again, which can only happen when hardware starts to work more heavily towards consistency and compatibility, then original development will flourish again because those extra months of honing and perfecting will cost a lot less for the development company. But until such time as that happens, I guess we will have to learn to enjoy endless licenses, sequels and games that look like other games. At least the odd, original gem still manages to creep through, although only about one per year is my current guess. But then again I am a cynical old Bastard. S

Industry Soapbox

Christmas is coming...

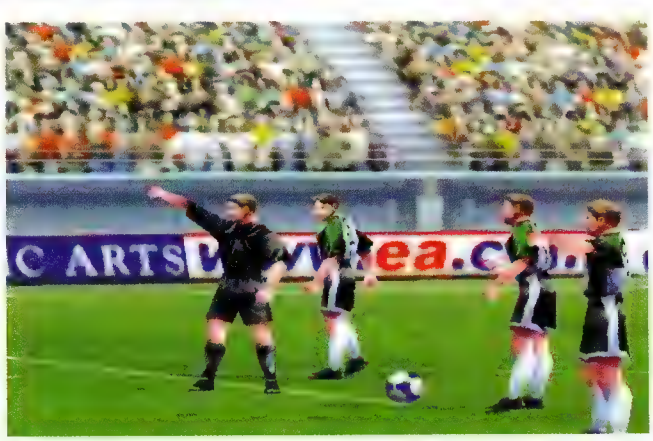
The third FIFA title within the space of a year is on its way. Station asks "Will it be the Christmas number one?" Does a bear sh.

A FIFA game has been number one at Christmas for the last five years, which seems a little odd to me because, let's face it, all of them except for last year's Christmas offering, *FIFA: Road To The World Cup* have been pretty poor to say the least. Thankfully though, *RTTWC* has seen an upturn in production values at EA sports and both *World Cup '98* and now FIFA '99 have the playability and graphics to do justice to the mighty FIFA brand. The third FIFA game within a year though. Isn't that pushing it a bit?

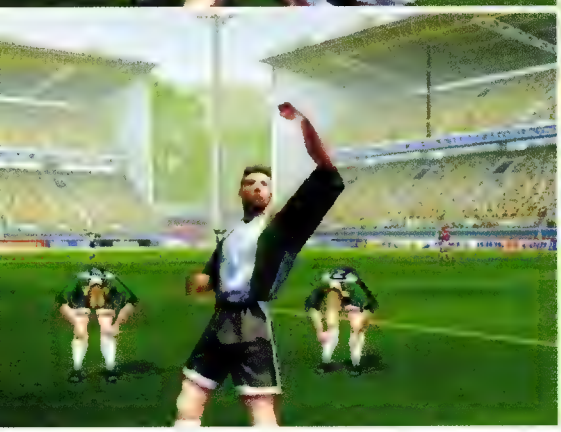
Statistical Changes

Well, yes and no. Whereas *World Cup '98* was merely *Road To The World Cup's* natural conclusion, i.e. the World Cup tournament itself, FIFA '99 actually attempts to add more to the series than simple statistic and tournament changes. It's about time too. Had they not added a great deal to FIFA '99, the more cynical of gamesplayers (us included) would surely snub the title this Christmas. Wouldn't we? No we would, honest.

"...Had they not added a great deal to FIFA '99, the more cynical of games players (us included) would surely have snubbed the title this Christmas..."



LEFT AND RIGHT: **Referee, you can't be serious. If only a football game allowed you to argue with the ref, or even better, physically assault him.**



So what are the main changes that FIFA '99 claims to have over its predecessor? Let's start with the boring statistical stuff shall we?

Instead of dealing mostly with international sides, a la the last two FIFA games, FIFA '99 has reverted to the original format of basing itself on club football. This time though, players can choose from over 250 worldwide club teams from twelve different territories. These are Brazil, Spain, England, Germany, Italy, France, Scotland, Netherlands, Sweden, Belgium, USA and Portugal. That should cover most peoples' footballing tastes, whether you want to play as Manchester Utd, Real Madrid, Inter Milan or Bayern Munich. It is a bit dubious having the States in that list though, when, for instance, the African nations have been left out. Still, EA Sports are an American developer. It'll be interesting to see exactly what stats the American teams have got against the rest of the teams in the game though.

New Leagues

New playing modes offer the chance to take part in around twelve new leagues, plus a league edit option that allows you to create your own league with your favourite teams. On top of this, you can play in the European Super League where you get to take ➔

THE PSX SYMBOLS DENOTE PLAYSTATION SCREENS

LEFT AND RIGHT: Of course, EA Sports couldn't ignore the old goal celebration business and once again, the little routines are as elaborate as ever.

The Title Race

FIFA '99 may be poised to take the number one slot this Christmas, but not if the following championship rivals have anything to do with it:

ACTUA SOCCER 3

Probably the only real competition that FIFA '99 will have this year. Actua Soccer 3 offers a serious soccer simulation that's accessible to new players as well as veterans, and riding off the back of the superb Actua Soccer 2 is going to give it that extra sales boost. Still, it's not just the pedigree that makes Actua Soccer the game that it is. Check out our cover feature to find out more.

MICHAEL OWEN'S WORLD LEAGUE SOCCER '99

Last year's World League Soccer really didn't get the attention it deserved as it was swallowed up by the other big football games. Maybe Michael Owen's endorsement can change that this Christmas? Although when it plays as well as this it's a shame that Eidos feel that they have to buy a famous footballer's name to help sell the game.

VIVA FOOTBALL

Most definitely the underdog in the title race, but it could come in and steal a few points whilst the big boys are battling it out amongst themselves. In fact, we think that Viva Football has the potential to be massive. Virgin Interactive have taken a different approach by basing the game on teams and players from the past. Want to play as Pele, no problem, he's here!

part in matches against the highest calibre European sides. There's also a season mode and three different cups to try your hand at. FIFA games are well known for the amount of different cups and leagues you can play in, but it looks as though FIFA '99 has taken this to the pinnacle. Of course, all of this has one major drawback; those damn annoying FIFA menus. But dodgy menus are a small price to pay for such an expansive coverage of the footballing world. Besides, there is now a new quick start mode that can get you into the game with just two button presses.

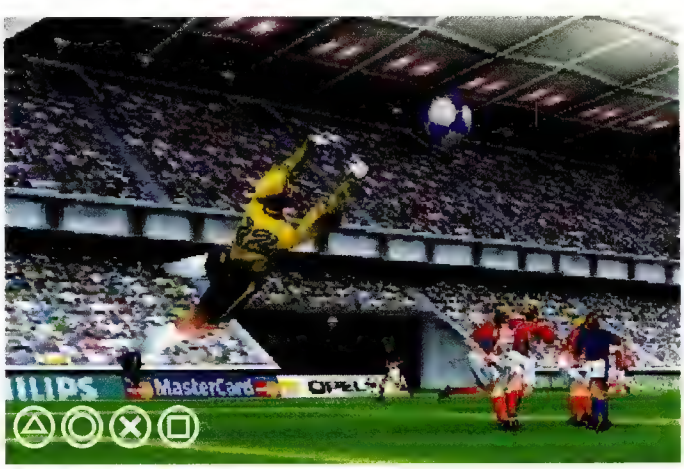
To compliment the different leagues and cups, EA sports have included a whopping twenty all-new stadiums from around the world. If you've played a FIFA game before, you'll know that EA Sports have a certain knack for creating unparalleled atmospheres in their gigantic stadiums, and FIFA '99, I'm happy to say, continues this tradition.

Score Goals

As for the actual game itself I can report that the basics haven't changed a great deal (the idea is still to score more goals than the opposing team), but EA Sports have added enough detail to make FIFA '99 a more than worthy update of *World Cup '98*.

Many of these details are on the graphical side of things, but a few gameplay changes ensure that this version plays slightly differently from the last one. A number of new moves have been implemented to give you even more control of your players' actions, and as well as additions to moves within the Skill Mode the most noticeable improvement is a new chest trapping move which serves two different purposes. It's basically a move that's useful for giving the players more control over airbound balls, and also for shielding the ball from the opposition. Although only a small detail, it's moves like

"...The skill mode is complimented by all of the usual fancy manoeuvres such as one-twos, through balls, bicycle kicks, volleys and headers..."



LEFT AND RIGHT: The goalies are often left to their own devices in many football games, but FIFA's semi-automatic system means that players have more control.

LEFT: Here's a shot of the new chest control move, which allows you to control airbound balls much easier. This adds a new element to the gameplay, as most airbound balls are simply headed away – but now you can trap it and dribble the ball away.

these that give FIFA that edge of realism that, let's face it, some football games are sorely lacking.

The new additions to the skill modes allow for more faking, dodging and ball dragging than ever before, making FIFA '99 possibly the most comprehensive football game available when it comes to dribbling. We can't understand why football games don't actually put more emphasis on this side of things when we all know that football isn't simply about passing and shooting. The skill mode is complimented by all of the usual fancy manoeuvres, such as one-twos, through balls, bicycle kicks, volleys and headers. Not exactly revolutionary moves for a soccer game but nonetheless, they have been implemented perfectly within FIFA '99.

Responsive?

EA Sports have also finally taken into account the fact that from day one, FIFA games have never been hailed as the responsive of football games. The development team have worked long and hard on this area, adding a much needed dose of fluidity. Improved AI that has been implemented in the game to make tackling and wing play far more realistic, giving the pitch a much wider feel and allowing players to use more space than in most other football games. This new AI also enhances the semi-automatic goalkeepers who are now much easier to control.

Christmas number 1?

Whilst we admit that the graphical touches EA Sports have added to FIFA '99 are a little superficial to the gameplay, these little details do add to the game's overall feel and the lighting has been upgraded to offer the game a more realistic atmosphere. One touch that did interest us was that the players are all different heights, quashing the myth that all football players are exactly the same dimensions as each other.

Although FIFA '99 is shaping up as one of the best football games the PlayStation has seen, it can't be forgotten that it is still only an update, and not a true sequel. There's also more competition this time around, with the likes of Actua Soccer 3, Michael Owen's World League Soccer and the rather special, and different, Viva Football. Who will come out on top as this year's favourite football game is anybody's guess. But if we had to bet on a Christmas number one, Station's money would be firmly on the boy FIFA '99.

MAIN: EA Sports have tweaked the AI to make tackling a much more realistic action, which should mean that you won't be able to rely on sliding tackles for the duration of a match.

FIFA '99

Publisher: **Electronic Arts**

Developer: **EA Sports**

Release Date: **Dec '99**

Game Type: **Duh?**

PAL Percentage Complete **75%**

The Early Verdict

FIFA '99: For

Over the last year or so, FIFA games have become more and more playable, and FIFA '99 promises to be the best version so far. Also, some neat graphical touches will give FIFA an atmosphere that is seemingly unparalleled in the PlayStation soccer world.

FIFA '99: Against

Although FIFA '99 adds a great deal to the last FIFA game it is still an update and not a sequel. So, if you own any of the previous FIFA games, don't expect see any major changes if you shell out for FIFA '99.

Anticipation Rating 95%

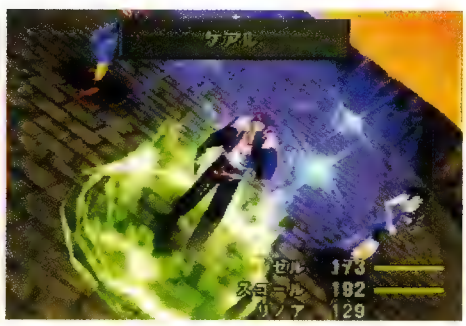
It's FIFA innit?

Concept Description

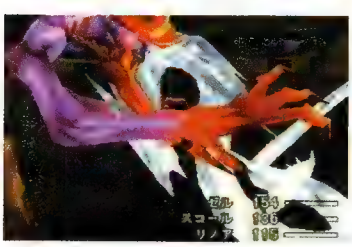
Take the best selling PlayStation football brand and milk it for the third time in a year. Cynical? You bet.

I want to be your quest

The Final Fantasy saga has changed perceptions of the role playing genre. The seventh installment is one of the most successful PlayStation titles ever. How can Squaresoft improve on that? Final Fantasy VIII, that's how...



LEFT TO RIGHT: **The first boss character is somewhat simple to defeat but impressive enough, all the same. The optical effects range from the familiar to the breath taking, the most basic of spells have been redesigned to fit more comfortably with the increased visual quality of the product.**



It's here, well sort of, finally making its much heralded premiere. Albeit in demo form, packaged with the action/adventure, Brave Fencer, Squaresoft's long awaited eighth installment of the magnificent Final Fantasy series has at last been unveiled. Although the demo offers only a brief look at the delights ahead, what is on display gives an indication of the superb quality that will be contained within the finished code.

FFVIII is a sequel in name only, featuring a completely new cast and plot, based around The Garden Military School, a higher learning facility funded by various world powers to craft an unstoppable army. The leading role honours have been awarded to yet another

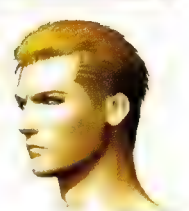
Final Fantasy: The Next Generation

SQUALL LEONHART

LAGUNA LOIRE

RINOA HEARTILLY

ZELL DINCHT


SEIFER ALMASY

LEFT TO RIGHT: The level of detail and general high quality of the graphics are so good that they almost become detracting. The victory animations are mildly amusing, if a little on the daft side.

good looking rebel who plays by his own rules, Mr Squall Leonhart. A hard bitten 17-year-old Garden graduate, who has found himself unwillingly adopting the role of the leader of a ragtag band of troops. His command literally thrust upon him, Squall's lack of experience and maturity puts him at a disadvantage, yet we suspect he'll soon see the error of his ways and by the end of the game will be as square-jawed and heroic as the next action hero.

Let Me Be Your Fantasy

Those readers already familiar with the Final Fantasy titles, will have already noticed the distinctly more mature leanings of the plot. As the series has progressed, each title has shown a marked increase in maturity, with the eight adopting an almost adult style to both content and visuals. Instantly noticeable is the removal of the Anime styled design of the leading players, with the new characters mirroring the realistic look of Squaresoft's decidedly macabre *Parasite Eve*. The polygon character builds have also increased in complexity to allow for more life-like proportions and movement. Further comparisons between this and the last installment also reveal the replacement of the gouraud shaded polygons with rich texture mapping, lending the characters further realism.

The removal of the trademark, Manga-styled characters initially sent out a disgruntled wave of disapproval around the office, yet when these static polygons are brought to life the results are not only impressive but also convincingly lifelike. The product's visual quality far exceeds the levels one would associate with the genre, a possible indication of Squaresoft's more mainstream approach to it.

Returning to visuals for a moment, in comparison with the characters, the backgrounds are admittedly rather disappointing. They remain pre-rendered and not polygon based, a tactic used to great effect in *Parasite Eve*. Fortunately, the increase in resolution and clarity has increased the levels of detail and quality, combining to once more enhance the sense of realism.

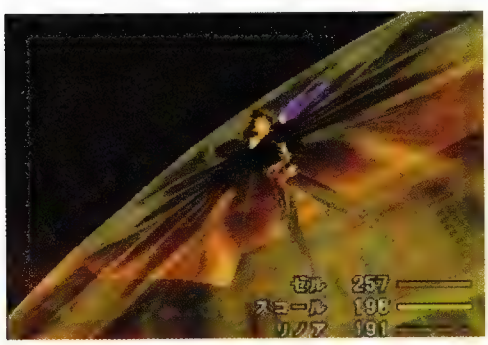
Heart Breaking

The battle sequences remain based upon the Active Time Battle system of the previous outing, but with some intriguing enhancements in the use of magic powers. Materia, the essential ingredient to increasing magical abilities, is no longer collected, but is absorbed from fallen enemies. Another new aspect are Guardian Forces – specially bred creatures that serve as protection to the player. Similar to Chocobos, the Guardians can be matured to suit a certain purpose, tailoring their strengths to suit the situation. Any further similarities between the two installments must end here, as the sheer splendour of these clashes of swords actually rendering the previous battles, though stunning at the time, void by comparison.

In an attempt to create an almost cinematic experience, the composition of each frame has been meticulously put together. Metal strikes against metal, huge explosions fill the screen, and as for the summons', just make sure you have a clean pair of jockeys at hand. It is impossible to do these battles any form of justice using the written word, but suffice to say they verge on the spectacular.

"Metal strikes against metal, huge explosions fill the screen, and as for the summons', just make sure you have a clean pair of jockeys at hand."

Having spent only the briefest of time in the pleasurable company of this magnificent game, any assurances needed to confirm that the next installment of this saga will shake the pillars of the industry can be given right now. We sat stunned and open mouthed at the sheer quality of Final Fantasy VIII, but we shed a quiet tear in the knowledge that almost 12 months await before the English language version will hit the shelves of Europe. A long relaxing sigh fills the air – at least we have plenty of time to prepare ourselves for our next meeting. Phew!



LEFT TO RIGHT: Squall's limit break attack in full flow, beautiful and also very damaging. Each character's polygon count is impressively high, even such minor players as a basic foot soldier are graphically detailed.

Final Fantasy VIII

Publisher: Sony

Developer: Square

Release Date: 4th Quarter '99

Game Type: RPG

PAL Percentage Complete 20%

The Early Verdict

Final Fantasy VIII: For

With the budget of a movie, the development talent of the world's finest programmers and a plot worthy of a Pulitzer, the plus points speak for themselves.

Final Fantasy VIII: Against

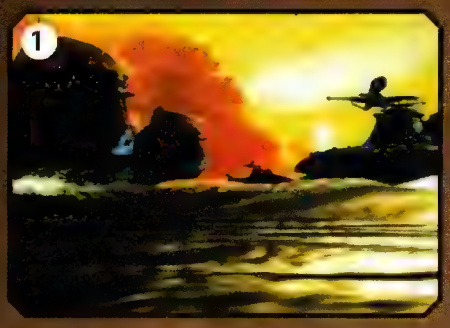
Not as huge a leap forward as the last installment and use of pre-rendered backgrounds are a little poor, but we must stress these are minor, minor niggles, this is the money, plain and simple.

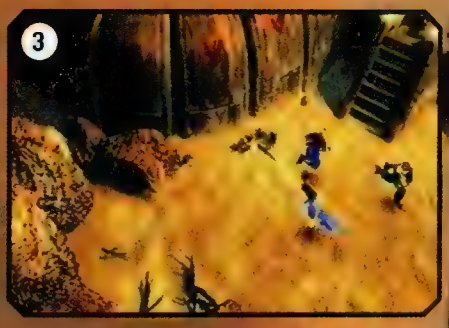
Anticipation Rating 95%

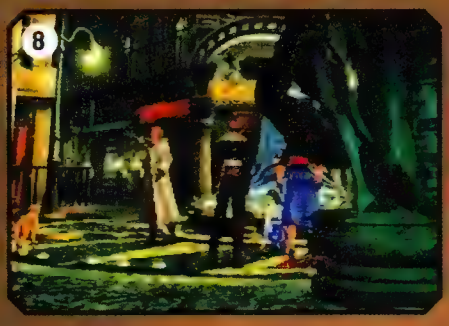
The follow up to one of the biggest PlayStation titles of all time, how can you not get a little fidgety about its release.

Concept Description

It's Final Fantasy VIII!







On With The Show

Unlikely to hit our shores, unless you are fortunate to own an NTSC compatible 'Station, this Final Fantasy VIII demo will not reach the massive audience it so richly deserves. Just so you don't feel left out in the cold, we bring a complete breakdown of all the demo has to offer, hardly a fitting substitute but a good indicator of what is to come...

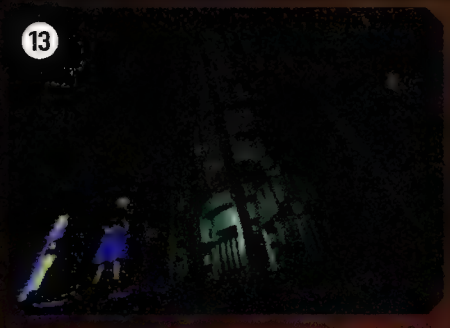
THE FINAL FANTASY VIII DEMO BEGINS WITH AN EPIC RENDERED SEQUENCE OF CINEMATIC PROPORTIONS:

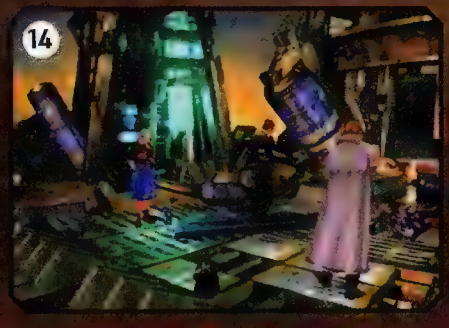
A silent seascape erupts into life, as a huge hovercraft cuts through the waves. The camera pans upward to reveal a squadron of passing aircraft. As their vapour trails begin to fade, we are again returned to the craft, where a lone figure appears on deck. Glancing at a map he looks forward as the wind cuts through his wild hair. The camera pulls in close to this warrior's face and glancing back at the map, he locates his target as the camera cuts to a distant angle. The craft begins to pick up speed, smashing through the harbour wall and coming to rest upon the sand. Squall gives the order to move out, and the game begins...

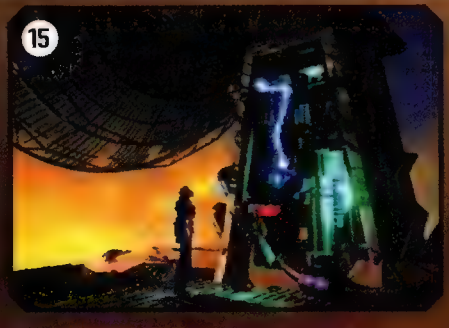
Flanked by Rinoa Heartilly, a female warrior, and Zell Dincht, a streetwise hood, the player exits the craft to be greeted by a superior officer. Ordered to follow him, you take your first steps into the un-named city.

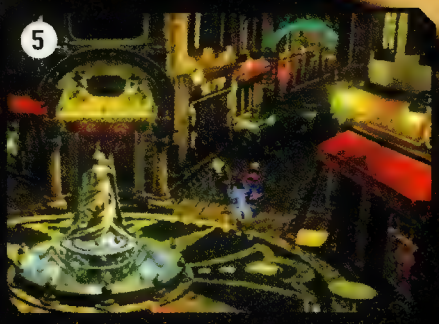
Reaching a crossroads, your exploration options are limited, all paths being blocked barring a single route. You progress in this direction until you reach a huge fountain and a charming, if purely incidental, pooch. Having successfully avoided alerting the guards to your presence, the players move onward.

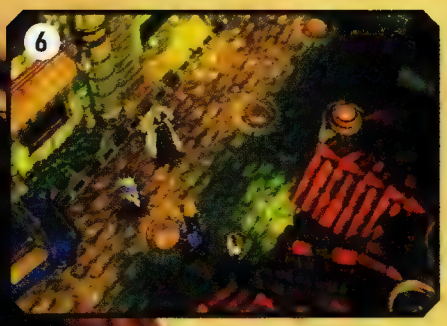
Moving out of the city to a long mountain pass, the player is confronted with

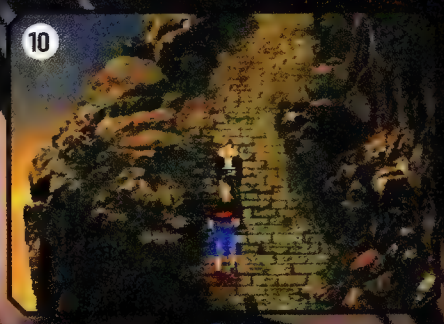












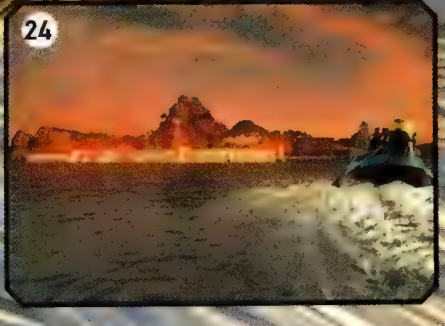
the first sub-boss, a huge mutated snake-like creature. Once he lies defeated, numerous battles with basic foot soldiers will occur, alerting your attention to the fact that something special lies ahead.

Having reached the mountain top, the player enters a huge radar stack, via a heavily guarded elevator.

Upon reaching the control panel of the dish, the player is treated to an animated sequence as a rogue scientist vainly attempts to contact reinforcements. Quickly dispatched, an ominous silence fills the air and suddenly the screen is awash with flames as a huge demon-like character appears. A long, hard-fought battle ensues, until the creature is finally destroyed.

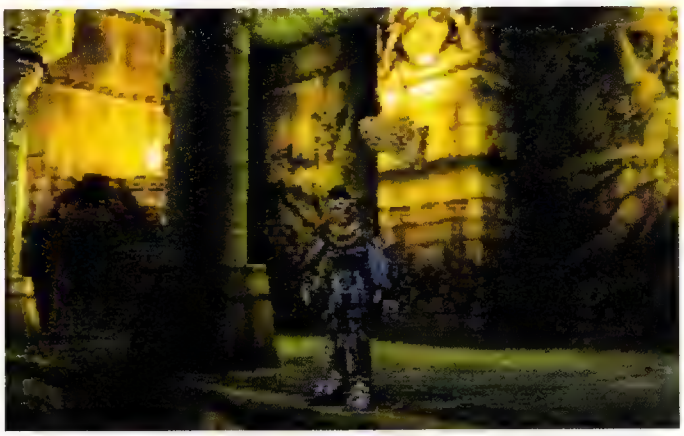
Victory is yours, as the characters once more mount the elevator and exit the building. Yet all is not over – a huge shadow appears upon the ground, the camera pans upward towards the radar dish. Revealing a vast mechanised spider descending the tower, the animated sequence ends and control is returned to the player as a fifteen minute timer clicks to life. With time against you, the only option is to run, passing back through the now deserted city streets facing numerous encounters with this daunting foe, but all attempts to engage it in battle are fruitless.

Finally reaching the beach, the characters enter the safe haven of their ship, the hull-mounted gun emplacements fire and destroy their powerful adversary with the utmost ease. Success is yours, but the demo is sadly over. As the end credits roll, our heroes sail off to the horizon and onwards to their next adventure without you. How annoying is that? **S**



I'll swallow your soul

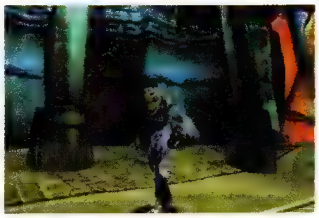
Children of the night – ah, but what sweet, nervous music they make. Nervous? Just keep your necks covered as we get our teeth into Crystal Dynamics' vampiric adventure, Legacy of Kain: Soul Reaver.



Blood-sucking freaks, mindless violence and anti-heroes are what's been lacking in the PlayStation software library. Too many cute, friendly or just plain damn pleasant videogame characters have torn away at our subconscious, leaving us lusting to embark upon a killing frenzy. Who wants to be a rosy-cheeked sweetie, rescuing a princess from the clutches of an evil wizard or some other equally stereotypical foe? Wouldn't you rather tear out the cast's throats, Princess and all, and feed upon their still-flowing blood? Possibly not, but those for whom blood-letting and general carnage is king, Eidos and Crystal Dynamics, have the perfect character waiting in the wings: a partially crippled, super-evolved vampire warrior, Raziel.

"The engine is actually rumoured to be an enhanced version of the one used to such great effect for *Gex 3D*, but it clearly illustrates Crystal Dynamics' obvious understanding of the PlayStation hardware."

FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: Although his wings have been torn from his body, Raziel's stumps enable him to glide; hints of *Tomb Raider* as the player takes control of the game camera; one of the many gifts granted to an evolved vampire is the ability to swim – to normal vampires water can be likened to battery acid; the complexity of the texture mapping and general levels of detail have meant that some form of masking has been used on the update.



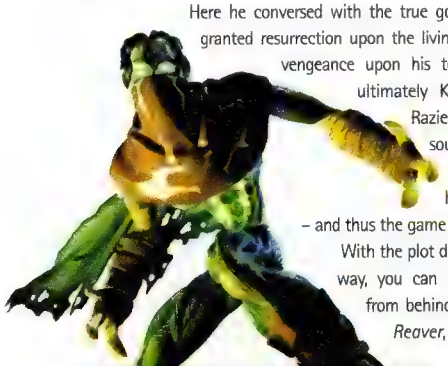
CLOCKWISE FROM MAIN: The detail of the 3D engine is staggering – note the stone carvings on the wall; although weapons can be used, there is nothing more fun than a bit of hand-to-hand action; the spectral zone seems far more fitting to the subject matter – dark, brooding and really rather scary.

Taking its basis from Crystal's early RPG adventure *Blood Omen: Legacy of Kain*, the semi-sequel is set more than 1000 years after the conclusion of the original. Kain's assault upon the planet has been a success, and the human race is nearing extinction as the vampire breed continues to strike at the heart of the planet. A barren wasteland is all that remains of the once-powerful kingdoms, now inhabited by hideous mutations and creatures. Kain's throne is doused in the blood of this dying realm.

As the world has fallen, the vampire inhabitants have flourished, their race becoming the dominate force. The elders having evolved beyond that of mere bloodsuckers, assuming the powers and nobility of demi-gods, with Kain reigning supreme.

Dracula has risen

Kain's control over his troops is unquestioned, yet his general, Raziel, chose to ascend further without permission. Reaching levels beyond that of Kain himself, Raziel was banished from the kingdom having been horrifically tortured, leaving wings torn from his body. As the strength slowly left his shattered frame, Raziel passed over into the Spectral area, the zone of the dead. Here he conversed with the true gods until finally granted resurrection upon the living plain to seek vengeance upon his tormentors, and ultimately Kain. In return, Raziel must reap the souls of his fallen foes, to feed his new masters – and thus the game begins.



With the plot details out of the way, you can now come out from behind the sofa. *Soul Reaver*, unlike the top-down text-driven RPG adventure that started the series, follows a similar path to the seminal *Tomb Raider*. Calling upon arcade skills and combat techniques, Soul Reaver falls into the third-person adventure genre, whilst boasting its own very unique twists. The lavish 3D worlds increase levels of texture detail far beyond that of Lara's romps. The clean, solid polygon environments are stunning, with a notable variation of intricate textures coupled with excellent water and transparency effects. The engine is actually rumoured to be an enhanced version of the one used to such great effect for *Gex 3D*, but clearly illustrates Crystal Dynamics' obvious understanding of PlayStation hardware.

From the grave

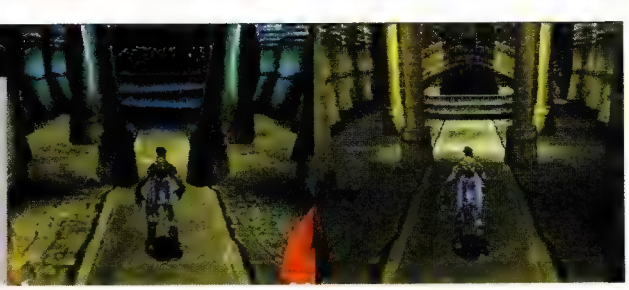
With the plot requiring the player to constantly move between two differing realms, the spiritual world and the spectral, the shift between these zones is represented by complete changes in the design of the level, thus revealing unreachable areas, hidden levels and a new host of foes, virtually doubling the life span of the title.

The amount of gore that lent the original notoriety will once again turn the screens red in this sequel, although blood does not play such a paramount role to the lead. The lifeblood – excuse the pun – of Raziel is not human claret, as one would expect, but instead their mortal souls. Each fallen creature's spirit will be released from the body, but instead of floating upward for their appointment with St Peter, the player can absorb this energy and grow stronger from the experience.

Dismissing claims of this being little more than *Tomb Raider* with fangs, Legacy of Kain 2 has all the makings of a game worth selling your soul for, or even parting with 40 notes to own. Macabre, stylish, aesthetically pleasing and it has real nasty streak – so how can we resist? Goodnight my children, sleep well and don't let the vampires bite. (Cue the manic laughter and lightning bolts.)

Interzone Trippin'

By crossing between the dimensions of the living and dead, Raziel not only affects the landscapes he visits but also the variety of nasties encountered. Note the change in the warping of the backgrounds and the reductions in lighting – the stuff of nightmares.



Legacy of Kain: Soul Reaver

Publisher: **Eidos**

Developer: **Crystal Dynamics**

Release Date: **March '99**

Game Type: **Third-Person Adventure**

PAL Percentage Complete **40%**

The Early Verdict

Legacy of Kain: Soul Reaver: For

As with its predecessor, the macabre plot and imposing atmosphere are pleasantly disturbing. Combine this dark style with the fantastic visual engine to concoct a devilishly alluring title.

Legacy of Kain: Soul Reaver: Against

The current build suffers from serious glitching, and the curse of this genre looks to have attached itself to the title. Yes, the dodgy camera is back! Sort this out, please!

Anticipation Rating 60%

The original's minor ripples of success may ignite a few sparks of recognition, yet the change of genre and lead character make this a sequel in name only. Word of mouth will generate a much-deserved fanfare.

Concept Description

Undead Tomb Raiding

Double Axe

Golden Axe and _Double Dragon_ – both classic pieces of arcade beat-'em-up action that will live on forever. Funsoft's Legend tries to capture the spirit of both games, but is this homage or sacrilege?

FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: If the scenery is about to block your view, a cool transparency effect will kick into action to allow you to see exactly what's happening; the double swords allow you to get closer to your opponents for more deadly and intricate attacks; a loading screen with some rendered characters yesterday.

Hacking and slashing your way through hordes of mindless barbarians and evil knights isn't a new concept. As far back as we can remember, swordfighting has had a place in gaming, with the likes of *Golden Axe* and *Ghosts & Goblins* remaining firm favourites for most arcade veterans. Legend looks set to bring this style of steel-wielding action to gamers who may never had the chance to play these medieval arcade classics. Players are cast as a hero in yet another battle between good and evil, and if you think we're about to follow that up by giving you a twist in the plot or something, you'd better think again. Because we're not, and there isn't. *Legend* is a pure and simple scrolling beat-'em-up that has your character walking from left to right down a path whilst fending off an army's worth of mutants, barbarians and mythical creatures, using any number of weapons that you may find along the way. Most of the time you'll be outnumbered, but in true *Golden Axe* or *Double Dragon* style, a quick succession of button-bashed moves should save any of your blood spilling onto the floor.

Every time you take a hit (and believe me, there will be many) your weapon bar will decrease a little. When the bar is completely depleted you'll lose the weapon and have to go hand to hand until you find another, which could be anything from longswords and daggers to crossbows and axes. You'll find plenty of other stuff on your travels, such as life-giving food, magic potions and gold coins (which usually have to be beaten out of your foe). This healthy bit of inner city style mugging will help you to buy weapons at the end of each level.

"A mix of combat and exploring action is promised, but so far we've only witnessed the fighting side of things."

Double Team

Legend offers you the chance to team up with a friend and take on the rampaging hordes on in a co-operative style. It has to be said that the two-player modes were where _Golden Axe_ and _Double Dragon_ excelled, and it looks as if, in this respect, Legend is going to be no different. As to whether it will have the two-player lastability of both of these classic games, well, only time will tell.

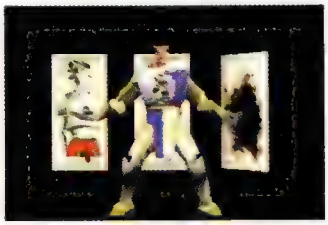
LEFT: Every time you are knocked to the ground you will drop your weapon. It can then be collected unless the weapon bar has completely depleted. If this happens, you'll have to rely on the good old hand-to-hand fighting, which can actually produce some devastating results.

ABOVE: Your opponents become progressively tougher as you make your way through the game, but if you have the right weapon you should be able to bash your way through.

The action itself is basically identical to any scrolling beat-'em-up from the past, so what have Funsoft come up with to make Legend a worthy PlayStation title then? Well, the graphics of course. Although not revolutionary, the depth and chunky feel to Legend is more than enough to make you believe that this really could be the next generation *Golden Axe*. Each of the three huge main characters looks fantastic, although at this stage in development, animation is still being further improved. The enemies are also just as large, with a little more variety being needed in this department otherwise players will become tired of seeing the same faces all of the time. All the backgrounds, coupled with several weather effects are all well-defined and of a suitably solid nature. The graphics hold together well, especially as there are often up to five of these big characters on screen at a time, without any slow-down or glitching.

Funsoft's attempts to add a roleplaying element to complement the straightforward beat-'em-up action, were not very advanced in the preview version we tested. A mix of combat and exploring action is promised, but so far we've only been able to witness the fighting side of things. Hopefully though, the exploration part will be interesting and in place by the time we get our review copy.

At the moment, the most impressive thing about *Legend* is the way it looks. That's not to say that the combat action isn't fun, it's just slightly limited. If Funsoft addresses this before its release, their ode to *Golden Axe* and *Ghost & Goblins* will stand a better chance of sharing some space alongside these classic games that seem to have already touched its progress.



ABOVE: You've three different characters to play which can be chosen at this character select screen. Players have their own favourite weapons and differing abilities – but mostly they just like to hit other people.

Legend

Publisher: Funsoft

Developer: In-house

Release Date: Nov '98

Game Type: Beat-'em-up

PAL Percentage Complete **80%**

The Early Verdict

Legend: For

The characters are some of the largest we've seen on any type of game and gives it a solid, chunky feel. Also, the attempt to mix *Double Dragon* style gameplay and adventure style tactics is an admirable goal in anyone.

Legend: Against

Controls for the three characters are similar for all the basic moves, but each character has their own special moves and preferred weapons. Also, at the moment, the gameplay is a little repetitive, which is due to the fact that there aren't too many moves to try yet.

Anticipation Rating 45%

I can't see people rushing out to put a deposit on Legend at the moment. Eidos' *Fighting Force* also tried to bring *Golden Axe* style gameplay to the PlayStation. Did it succeed?...

Concept Description

Take the classic *Golden Axe* and beef it up with some extremely chunky visuals, then add a little adventure element into the mix.

Cool runnings

No sooner has the sun begun to dip from its summer zennith, than the first of the winter sports games makes an appearance. Must be time for CoolBoarding again...

Last year's CoolBoarders 2 stood out impressively from a batch of decidedly dodgy winter sports games, all attempting to jump on this fashionable bandwagon. Its success was due mainly to it being the fastest, most thrilling and long-lasting snowboarding game around – it certainly didn't sell on its looks! Let's face it, if *CoolBoarders 2* was a woman, she'd look like she had just licked a polar bear's excrement off an Arctic nettle.

CoolBoarders 3 however, seems to have spent a lot longer in the virtual beauty salon than its scarred predecessor, adding a massive amount of visual flair to the already superlative snow-based gameplay. The icy surfaces have been given a new lease of life, with sharper textures and much-improved and smoother mapping. The flickering lines that previously gave away the joins in the ground have been addressed, and although not perfect at the moment, this problem is far less prevalent than before. Credit where credit is due though – once you see this game running, you'll be impressed at how well the developers have managed to keep everything so solid while maintaining such a breakneck game speed.

Chill

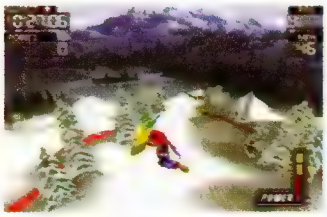
Thankfully, the snowboarders themselves have been given a complete overhaul too. So instead of being made up of just a few basic textured polygons, this time around they have been superbly motion-captured to give the game even more realism. The characters are far more detailed than in previous incarnations, their clothes are more defined, and you can even see sponsorship logos on their baggy pants and Gore-Tex jackets.

"...Like last year's offering, CoolBoarders 3 offers a plethora of different events to keep players hooked on the action..."

FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: **The snow has kindly been painted blue on the best jumps. Nice; a punch to the head sees one of my rivals hit the deck; pipes and logs can be used to slide across to earn yourself extra points; the various half-pipes provide the opportunity to do some big style hot-doggin' for top points.**

Cool Link

Sony are really trying to push the link-up cable as a viable gameplay option. Predictably then, CoolBoarders 3 will have this option by the time it reaches the shelves. We've yet to test it out because it wasn't working for the preview version we received, but as long as there's no slowdown or glitching, it has the potential to become one of the best link-up titles ever.



CLOCKWISE FROM MAIN: **The Boarder Cross event can become very competitive as you all try to squeeze around the tight corners; there are over twenty different sponsored boards to choose from; here we go again... instant head rush!**

The motion capture was provided by some of the sport's top riders, with the result being a smooth transition from real-life to on-screen action.

Even the stunt system has received a make over, which has made it much harder to pull off tricks, but far more satisfying when you finally succeed. Anything from a simple nose grab and tuck to a 1080° spin or a fakie flip require far more timing and technique than was previously necessary. Experts will enjoy the fact that different combinations of stunts can now be linked together on some of the bigger jumps to earn themselves even more points.

Big air

Like last year's offering, CoolBoarders 3 offers a plethora of different events to keep players hooked, and in general, things do seem to be a lot more complete now. The main Half-Pipe, Big Air and Downhill events are backed up by cool Slalom, Slope Style and Boarder Cross races, with the extra events adding more depth and realism to the game.

Also adding substance to the action is the amount of tracks provided for the boarders to hurtle down. There are five different mountains (including Everest!) and over thirty perilous tracks to take on. The new environments and courses have all been designed with maximum adrenaline rush in mind, and you will find far more jumps, slides and obstacles to avoid, or not avoid, depending on the size of your balls.

Snow rash

The racing has also been spiced up by the addition of the ability to punch your opponents – a bit like *Road Rash* on snow, although without the motorbikes (obviously). The AI of the computer controlled racers has been improved, so that this time they will actually try to take you and each other out. You will also catch them pulling off their own stunts to amuse themselves. Alas, the superior graphics, speed and gameplay has meant that some of the racers have had to be sacrificed. So now, instead of eight gnarly dudes and dudettes caning it to the bottom of the mountain, there are only four. This does mean that the qualification jump rounds have been axed, and a proper, four way fair start can take place.

The extra events in CoolBoarders 3 promise to add a whole new depth to what was already a very deep and long-lasting game. To add to this we have the superb new visuals, all-new tracks, better-looking coolboarders, smoother gameplay, intuitive hands-on control and what could be a devastating link-up mode. It looks as though we're in for a veritable winter treat!

CoolBoarders 3

Publisher: SCEE

Developer: 989 Studios

Release Date: November '98

Game Type: Winter Sports Sim

PAL Percentage Complete 90%

The Early Verdict

Coolboarders 3: For

Coolboarders 2 was by far the best of last year's snowboarding crop, and we would have thought it hard to improve upon. But already this follow-up looks even better, has a far greater variety of courses and is smoother than George Dawes' pate.

Coolboarders 3: Against

Snowboarding is not exactly everybody's cup of tea, and although CoolBoarders 3 represents a good simulation, there are some people who will hate this game simply because they hate the sport.

Anticipation Rating 75%

Year after year, snowboarding becomes more and more popular, and the *CoolBoarders* series seems to mirror this trend.

Concept Description

Arcade-style winter sport appealing to 'da kidz on da street', like...

Ants in yer pants

The unlikeliest hero to march out of the Disney studios and into the expanding world of Sony is no more than a tiny ant. But you know what they say: "Good things come in small packages."

A Bug's Life

Publisher: Disney

Developer: Pixar

Release Date: Spring '99

Game Type: Platform

PAL Percentage Complete **50%**

The Early Verdict

A Bug's Life: For

The graphics look beautiful and the concept could prove to be a real trump card in the Sony deck.

A Bug's Life: Against

Control method is clumsy and dreadfully unresponsive.

Anticipation Rating 85%

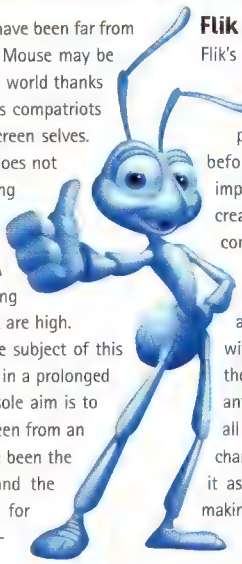
It looks special, and the idea is a pretty novel one. Behind it is the full backing of two giants, Disney and Sony... the game really can't fail – can it?

Concept Description

A cute ant roams the world in search of an army to protect his queen from an invasion of grasshoppers!

Giants of animation, Disney have been far from dominant on the PlayStation so far. Mickey Mouse may be one of the most recognised characters in the world thanks to his movies, but on the console he and his compatriots are little more than shadows of their big screen selves. Disney's A Bug's Life will be hoping that it does not follow in the footsteps of the disappointing *Hercules* when it is simultaneously released on the big screen and grey box later this year. The difference is, unlike *Hercules*, A Bug's Life oozes class, and with the full backing of Sony Europe, expectations for the product are high.

The exploits of an ant called Flik are the subject of this title, which sees a minuscule insect involved in a prolonged conflict with an army of grasshoppers. His sole aim is to collect an army of his own to protect his queen from an impending assault. Cute-looking heroes have been the subject of many a Disney success story, and the American masters of animation seem keen for this four-legged (shouldn't that be six-legged?) insect to carry on that tradition.

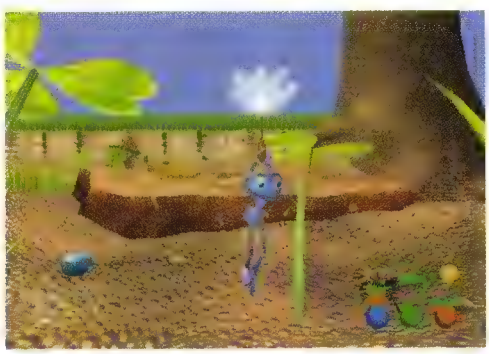


Flik of the wrist

Flik's environment is a large, graphically pleasurable place in which he is free to roam around a fully-explorable 3D area. The action is viewed through a third-person perspective, with plants and subjects actually growing before your very eyes, such is the detail Disney are implementing this time around. With hundreds of different creatures and a wealth of brain-teasing puzzles to be completed, this is already shaping up to be a quality title.

Your main objective is to gather a posse of gladiator bugs to help fight your cause, thus saving the queen and the ant colony and sending the King of the Grasshoppers home with his wings between his legs. It's the overall presentation, though, that establishes A Bug's Life as a quality product. Fun antics and a large dosage of Disney humour ensures appeal to all ages of the gaming spectrum, and with a bug as the star character, who knows – maybe the insect society may warm to it as well? With this looking like another blockbuster in the making, Disney seem to be proving once again that there are no flies on them... only a selection of top quality bugs.

"Fun antics and a large dosage of Disney humour ensures appeal to all ages of the gaming spectrum."



FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: Flik floats across his simulated garden in search of those ever-illusive troops. Flik's arch enemies, the grasshoppers, do not wait for an invitation for a good chase situation.

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Fruit punch

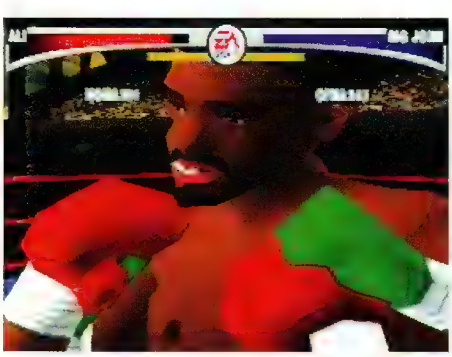
As all of this year's big beat-'em-up games continue to follow distinctly martial themes, Electronic Arts has decided to muscle in and hit back – and this time the gloves are well and truly off!

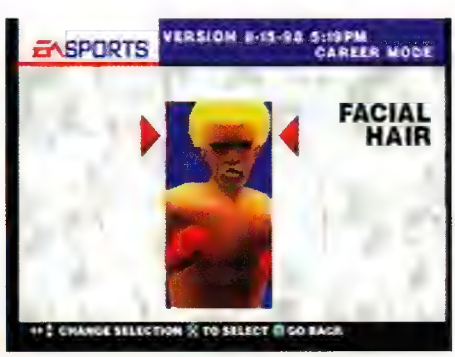
FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: **The ability to taunt your opponent can very easily lead to some very heated responses; float like butterfly, sting like a bee. Ali proves great poetry can be performed in a physical form; the training section will aid your fighter in his preparation towards his next bout; you can make your fighter as outrageous as you like, but do be careful about the potential pitfalls of home perms and 'overbleaching'.**

Love it, or hate it, this highly controversial sport has always been the subject of heated emotions from many, including both the media and the general public. The concept of two highly trained individuals physically damaging one another for large sums of cash probably justifies a critical eye. It is a sport that requires both artistry and brutality, and whilst pugilists are subjected to equal amounts of condemnation and mental damage, the champions are in fact some of the biggest celebrities in the world. Without prejudice of social standing, colour or creed, boxing is a great leveller and it appeals to the animal instinct within us all. Terms such as "go for the ribs" and "knock his head off" would be frowned upon if bellowed in the local supermarket, but in an arena where violent conduct is condoned and labelled as sport, these kind of phrases represent acceptable behaviour.

EA Sports have taken the glamour and the cowbell status of the sport and packaged it all into an active celebration of boxing's history. The excitement and the razzmatazz has been captured to a degree we have come to expect from a company that has consistently proved to be way ahead of the competition in the world of sports simulations. Big name signings and vast amounts of money spent on

"Knockout Kings has an impressive array of 38 fighters... all of them from boxing's hall of fame."





FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: **There are many different camera angles for you to use... The top-down doesn't really give you the best viewing position in the arena; if the fight ends without a knockout, the judges will select a victor through a point-scoring system. Expect to see a jubilant winner and a dejected runner-up.**

the latest technological equipment, all wrapped up in the refined presentational expertise synonymous with EA. This is Knockout Kings.

Below the Belt

With such a limited quantity of boxing software available, it wouldn't be surprising to find complacency among the developers. After all, with such little competition, fight fans have hardly got a lot of choice have they? Thankfully, EA have not taken any shortcuts with Knockout Kings. The game boasts 38 fighters from boxing's hall of fame. Unforgettable personalities such as Muhammad Ali, Rocky Marciano, Sugar Ray Leonard and 'marvellous' Marvin Hagler all feature along with present day heroes like Lennox Lewis and Evander Holyfield. With such a wealth of talent on display, fans of the sport, both young and old, will be catered for. Individual stats for each fighter, including weight, height, fighting style and artificial intelligence have also been implemented for added realism. They all look, behave and fight like their real-life counterparts.

The razzmatazz of boxing is also captured to the full in Knockout Kings. Each of the fighters are led into the ring with their own music playing through the loudspeakers. Funk, hip hop, rock and even big band for the old fighters will accompany them to ringside where they will be announced by another big name, Jimmy Lennon Jr. Not stopping there, inside the ring offers an equally impressive line up. Famous bald referee, Mills Lane will give the fighters instructions, whilst the combination of Sean O' Grady and Al Albert provide a running commentary.

It's a Knockout

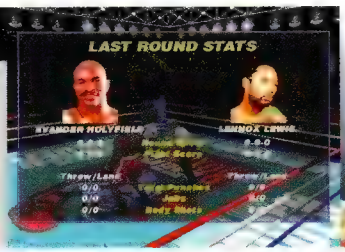
There are three different styles of game that you can play – Slugfest, Exhibition and Career with each being avavilable as light, middle or heavyweight divisions. Career is arguably the most accessible feature, especially for those aspiring to be glove-wearers themselves. This gives you the option to create your own boxer, develop a fighting style and take him up through the world rankings. You play the role of manager, fighter and trainer all in one go.

Each boxer has the usual array of moves at their disposal. Uppercuts, hooks, jabs and body blows, as well as many combination attacks, various taunts and the excellent foul punches to the kidneys and the groin. The action is somewhat sluggish in comparison to the slick nature of the pre-fight glitz, but once you've mastered the controls, skilful fighting and quite advanced tactics can be attained. With a distinct lack of competition to oppose it, and with the sizeable backing of EA behind it, Knockout Kings already looks like a belt-holder in the making.

FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: **With a good selection of different punches, combinations and dirty attacks, KK should appeal to fans of the sport and beat-'em-ups in general; punches to the groin and the kidneys can be executed whenever – although the ref will advise against them and may even deducted points or disqualify you if you persist; the great Muhammed Ali faces his toughest challenge yet – how to see past the flourescent glow of his opponent's gloves!**

Two's company

Lennox Lewis and Evander Holyfield are two of the biggest names present-day boxing has on offer. You can either fight as, or against them. Trouble is, Evander would probably chicken out.



Knockout Kings

Publisher: EA Sports

Developer: Press Start

Release Date: October

Game Type: Boxing Sim.

PAL Percentage Complete **60%**

The Early Verdict

Knockout Kings: For

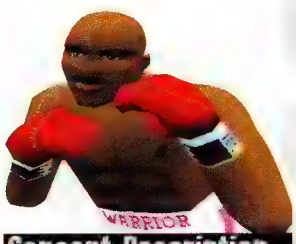
Apart from the wealth of fighters and the variety of tournaments, Knockout Kings also has a career mode that allows you to create a boxer and progress through the world rankings with him.

Knockout Kings: Against

At the moment the controls appear to be sluggish, and there doesn't seem to be a lot of skill involved. Boxing is also a sport with a limited target audience.

Anticipation Rating 75%

Will appeal to a limited audience, but is far better than the competition. Classic fighters will provide added enjoyment, as will the ability to visibly cut your opponent.



Concept Description

3D boxing simulation that spans the history of the sport.

No man, no stuntman, no equal

He's had a rumble in the Bronx, he has told the police a few stories, but Hong Kong cinema's finest export – one Mr Jackie Chan – is about to face his toughest adversary yet... the PlayStation owner.

Broken limbs, fractured skulls and numerous head wounds are all in a day's work for the Hong Kong superstar Jackie Chan. The annoyingly amazing star of countless chop-socky epics has finally cracked the international market, elevating himself into the ranks of Hollywood stardom. His almost baffling style incorporates such diverse elements as traditional kung fu, breathtaking stunts, slapstick comedy and an almost childlike innocence. Each of these facets are drawn together to create a wonderfully overwhelming visual experience that is beyond compare.

Having fought countless armies of foes with his bare hands, saved the world on numerous occasions and risked life and limb for his art, the king of comedy kung fu faces his most deadly challenge yet: the often painful transition from the big screen to the videogame. Sony's Jackie Chan's Stuntmaster is not a license of one of Chan's movies, but instead bases the gameplay around the man himself and his trademark talents – a decision that has raised a few eyebrows and inspires some questions concerning content, yet one that is clearly logical to us. Chan's movies are not well-structured character-driven exercises in fine art, but they are, and don't pretend to be anything more than, a series of increasingly complex and aesthetically pleasing fight and stunt sequences, each linked by an anorexically thin plot. So why bother buying a license?

You Killed My Master...

The game takes place in the dark streets of downtown Hong Kong. Filming has closed on Chan's latest production and all is happy until... disaster strikes! Local gangsters have stolen all the canisters of film! Ever loyal to his fans, Chan takes it upon himself to track down these cans of celluloid gold, thus avoiding disappointment come opening night. The plot devised is in keeping with most of Chan's previous starring roles. Again, the game places much reliance upon the action content to distract from the flimsy story line.

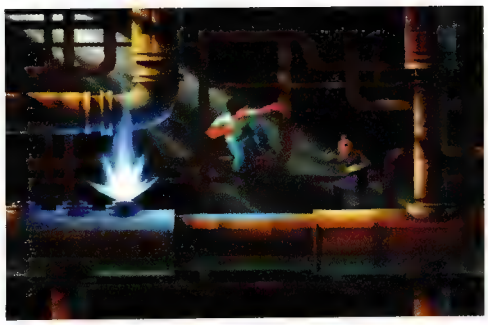
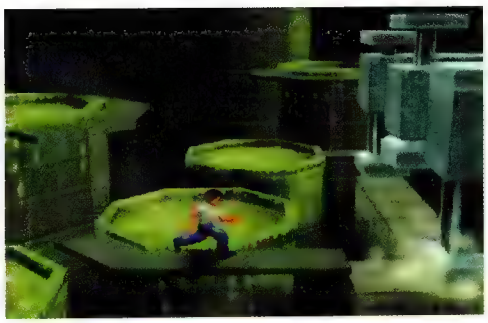
Incorporating elements of full free-roaming 3D exploration, hand to hand combat and platform action, the player must

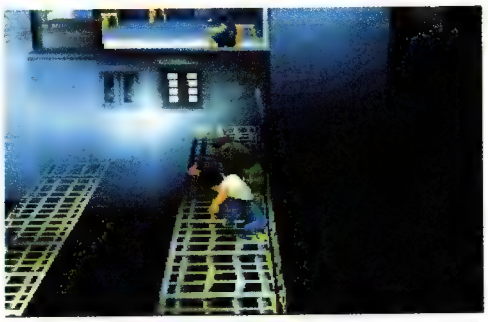
ABOVE: The end-of-area cut scenes use the game engine, removing loading times and their damaging affect upon gameplay.

You Think You Can Fight?

Playing up the humourous elements, the gangster types are straight from the pages of a comic book. Will this style of design have a negative effect upon the atmosphere of the title, or simply add to the tongue-in-cheek fun?

AKMED BROCK IGOR LENNY GRONTAR WENDELL CAL



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: More basic platform elements come into play – not the most exciting addition to the game code by any means; the visuals are very stylised, inspiring comparisons with Nintendo software; at times like these the player is advised to try to knock their opponent off the edge – it's much quicker; the combat mechanics are somewhat less intensive than *Tekken*, but will serve up enough moves to break a lot of heads.

negotiate 12 varying locations, doing battle with all that stands in the way. The mainstay of the product will obviously be the combat – a factor at which Chan excels. The game utilises elements of the scenery and incidental items offensively, mimicking the 'anything goes' style of the big screen choreography. Chan's nimble fingers turning such innocent fare as ladders and chairs into deadly weapons are commonplace in his world and are natural 'must' inclusions to the game code.

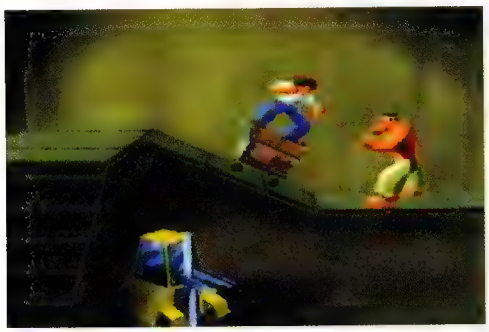
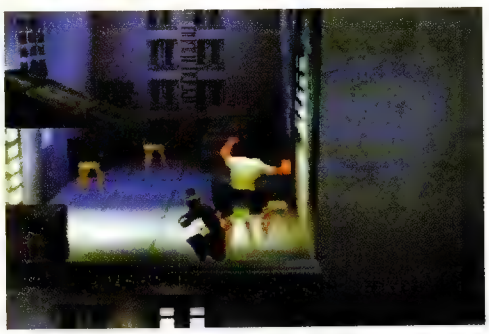
Prepare to Die

Thankfully, the developers have not lost focus of Chan's other talents. To feature as close a reproduction of the Chanster as possible, the gameplay features recognise both his agility as a stuntman/acrobat and also his self-mocking but pleasantly dumb humour. Level design has been adjusted to allow the player to step into Chan's danger shoes to perform some amazing feats of stunt-related stupidity. Vocal samples have been taken, adding to the level of humour already achieved by the almost comic book visuals. Most promising is the level of endorsement Chan has given to the game. He apparently spent two days with the development team during the motion capture process to ensure the utmost quality of fluid movement, which clocks in at over 140 animated movements.

An interesting, if minor, touch is the use of multi-camera viewpoints when Chan should take a tumble or a good kicking, with each of these sequences linked at the end of each level as in the end credit sequence out-takes of his films.

Jackie Chan's Stuntmaster has the makings of a cracking, if horribly shallow, piece of pure entertainment – something that Chan has made his name producing. The co-operation of the star and the many similarities between the game and his movies are also very positive signs. Yet, putting personal opinions aside for the moment, Chan's consumer appeal is still very limited, and questions have to be asked whether the product will be able to draw in the unconverted. Will Chan make a huge impact or just a minor rumble on the PlayStation?

"The game utilises the scenery and incidental items offensively, mimicking the 'anything goes' style of the big screen choreography."

FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: Mine cart rides have been implemented to break up the flow of the gameplay and add a little originality; The timing needed to successfully perform the above jump is essential, or Jackie will break yet another bone.

Jackie Chan's Stuntmaster

Publisher: Sony

Developer: Radical Ent.

Release Date: April '99

Game Type: Beat-'em-up

PAL Percentage Complete **40%**

The Early Verdict

Jackie Chan's Stuntmaster: For

Captures the charm and inimitable style of Mr Chan without losing out in terms of gameplay. Fans across the globe are already soiling themselves in anticipation.

Jackie Chan's Stuntmaster: Against

Chan's mainstream success in both Asia and the US will help promote the title in these markets, yet his status in Europe remains very much on a cult level – the knock-on effect being a limit upon potential sales figures.

Anticipation Rating 25%

Although adored by many, Chan is hardly up there with such money-generating names as Stallone and Willis, thus media exposure will suffer accordingly.

Concept Description

Extremely cool Chinese bloke kicks ass while sporting a dodgy haircut.

Memories...

It's been a long time since somebody's tried to do something different with a football game, but Virgin think they've cracked it. Viva Football...

The ultimate carnival atmosphere can be found amongst the Mexican waves and Batacuda drums of the World Cup finals, where the game of football becomes more than just a sport, and hundreds of millions of people worldwide become football mad for a couple of months every four years. Many a goal has been scored in this celebration of sporting excellence, and many a memory has been created. Virgin hope to capture these memories on CD, with a soccer game with a difference – Viva Football.

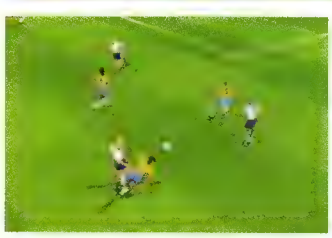
It has to be said that there can only be so many variations on the football game theme, so the arrival of Viva Football in the office was like a breath of fresh air after visiting public toilets on a Saturday night. Rather than offer you all of the most up-to-date stats, teams and players, it attempts to give you a look at the history of football by including every team that's ever qualified for the World Cup since 1958. This means that you can play as anybody from 70's Brazil to 60's Argentina. Players such as Pele, Shilton, Maradona and Gullit are all here amongst thousands of other famous, and not so famous, World Cup heroes. Don't worry though, all of the recent teams are available, so if you want to play as Hoddle's failed World Cup '98 squad, you won't be disappointed, or maybe you will. Again.

Viva Playability

History aside, we all know that the success of a football game depends mostly on its playability. Something that from what we've seen so far, Viva Football has plenty of.

This is actually partly due to the history element, because you don't have to be a hardened football fan to really enjoy it. I mean, who wouldn't want to play in Pele's Brazil or try to alter the outcome of the Hand Of God incident?

The gameplay itself is extremely enjoyable as it offers a football simulation that is both fun and accessible, whilst also being realistic and intuitive. The version we're playing isn't



Caught On Camera

Before the game starts, you're treated to a number of animated scenes taken from some of the most memorable moments in football history. A lynching scene from the infamous Battle of Santiago match and the infamous coke snorter Maradona knocking England out of the '86 World Cup are the highlights, but all of the animations make interesting watching.

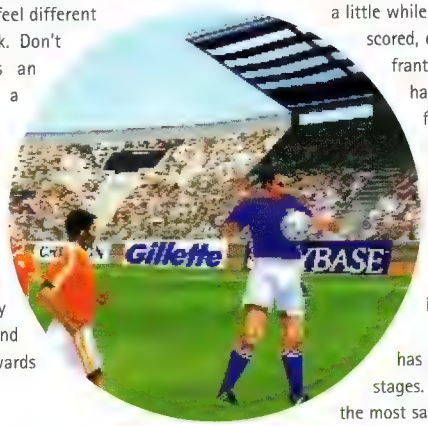
LEFT TO RIGHT: Check out the old style kits. It's a shame that we don't get a range of blonde mullets and shaggy perms though; Viva offers a different kind of gameplay style to most other football games. You can actually use the space to dribble and play across the pitch, rather than just up and down.

"...It's been a while since a football game has promised so much in the development stages..."

completely finished, but we can already tell you that the gameplay is up there with the best of the PlayStation football games.

The game doesn't appear to be much different until you start, all of the usual kicks and manoeuvres are in place, but there's something that makes it feel different to the rest of the footballing pack. Don't worry though, as it also offers an extremely realistic rendition of a soccer match to boot.

This is mostly due to the space that can be found on the pitch. At last, a football game where the play doesn't just run up and down the field! The size of the playing area means that you can switch plays across the field and create many different types of manoeuvres around the left/right axis, and not just towards the goals.



Viva Visuals

As well as already having solid, entertaining and realistic gameplay, Viva Football is also looking very promising in the visual department. All of the stadia have a suitable carnival atmosphere which is perfectly suited to the football celebration style of the game. The player animation and detail is nearly complete and already it's looking as though it can mix it with the best of them.

This is also backed up by a truly dynamic crowd noise that actually changes as the game progresses. If the action lulls for a little while, so will the crowd – but once a goal is scored, or a shot is missed the crowd becomes frantic. One thing that Viva Football doesn't have is a commentator, as the developers feel that they can become boring and repetitive. It is, however, replaced with a player chat system, where you can actually hear players shouting to each other on the pitch. They haven't been lazy either, as all of the player chat is in the correct language for the team it's coming from.

It's been a while since a football game has promised so much in the development stages. Viva Football's new approach to one of the most saturated genres on the PlayStation could be construed as novelty factor, but it really does offer a worthy alternative to its contemporaries. And even if the football history element doesn't interest you, there's plenty of visual flair and gameplay to give Viva Football just as much chance of winning the forthcoming PlayStation match as the rest of the more established soccer games on the way.

LEFT TO RIGHT: Viva Football has all the usual skill type moves and unlike other games gives you the opportunity to make Pelé pull off a bicycle kick; the wider camera angles give you the best view to set-up more diverse plays.

Viva Football

Publisher: Virgin

Developer: Silicon Dreams

Release Date: Nov '98

Game Type: Soccer Sim.

PAL Percentage Complete 90%

The Early Verdict

Viva Football: For

Viva Football is a real footballing fan's treat. All of the most famous international teams and players from the last forty years are here, resplendent in the kits of their time. Fancy playing as early seventies Brazil? What about England in 1990? Well, now, thanks to Virgin, you can.

Viva Football: Against

The general trend with most football games is to be as up to date as possible with all of the latest teams, players and kits. If this is what you look for in a soccer game, you'd better look somewhere else.

Anticipation Rating 75%

Most players are looking forward to the latest FIFA and Actua updates, but Viva Football could cause some surprises come Christmas.

Concept Description

The golden ages of football are coming home.

World Class

World League Soccer '98 was a great football game with one gaping flaw – it was too hard to score. With Michael Owen on the team for World League Soccer '99, scoring shouldn't be such a problem now...

FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: As is par for the course on a soccer game, there are plenty of different camera angles to choose from. The wider views are usually the best because you can see more of your team members; the midfield often becomes messy on some football games, but the crispness of the WLS players means that you can follow the action without losing track of the ball; Some of the close-up camera angles are the most detailed we've seen on any footy game.

Young Michael Owen proved himself as one of the best footballers in the world over the course of a few short weeks during the World Cup earlier this year. And at only eighteen, his marketing potential has gone up faster than manager's salarys. So it really was quite inevitable that a Michael Own endorsed football game would appear soon after. That game comes from Eidos, and is the follow up to last year's worthy but slightly flawed World League Soccer '98.

Most football game sequels usually turn out to be little more than updates, but Eidos haven't rested on their medium-sized laurels after *WLS '98*. In fact, WLS '99 promises to be the first ever true soccer sequel. It has kept the spirit of intricate gameplay mixed with full-on arcade action from the original game, but it now comes in a much more eye-pleasing and polished package.

The visuals have been completely redone to give the game a high-resolution shine that no other football game can offer. The

Let's Just See That Again...

Any football game worth its salt will offer a multitude of different angles for the goal replays. Not wanting to be left out, Eidos have provided us with more camera angles than ever seen before in a football game. Most of us will hit cancel after a few different angles, but the true football trainspotters are in for a treat.

FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: The player animations are very realistic, but at times like these you don't really have the opportunity to admire them; the goalkeeper can actually be controlled in the thick of the action, which leads to some silly cock-ups; don't be fooled by this picture. The guy in the blue shirt was not in a great position to score – it was a defensive header; realism includes having great big shadows – pitch invasions are not included yet!

motion-captured player animation backs this up by offering some of the most fluid action we've yet to see on the PlayStation. No speed is lost due to the extra graphical shine and the game is running at a stunning pace. There is one problem with the visuals though; the admittedly detailed characters could do with losing a little weight. Other than this though, every detail has been taken into account and visually, WLS '99 is looking extremely promising.

Brainy Footballers!?

The gameplay has also been radically overhauled, even though WLS '98 was extremely playable in the first place. The player AI has been tweaked to make the players more aware of what they are doing and to make things as unpredictable as possible when playing a one-player game. This doesn't make the game harder though, as Eidos have made a conscious effort to make WLS '99 more accessible. This is in reaction to the criticism that *WLS '98* was too tough and almost impossible to score on. Some people enjoyed this style of game though, as it offered more depth and a realistic scoreline. WLS '99 has two modes of play, one for beginners and another for more experienced or daring players. The latter is more in keeping with the challenge of the original game, which WLS veterans will lap up.

The action itself is proving to be easier to get into than the original game, which allows you to produce more flowing movements and better passing sprees. The addition of a skill mode, which does admittedly owe a lot to FIFA games, adds an extra layer of depth to the gameplay. By holding down the triangle button and hitting different directions on the joypad you can produce a number of different shimmies, ball drags and tackle jumps which means that unlike most football games, it is actually possible to avoid losing the ball once the other player has launched a sliding tackle on you.

International World League Soccer

As well as radical graphical and in-game changes, Silicon Dreams have also added a mass of new elements. There's a range of newly designed international stadia with the option to play in international Super Leagues. Also included are all of the new kits for the '98 to '99 season for domestic and international teams, and an all new real-time commentary promises to spice up the action with a bit of verbal wit. The 3D animated crowds and full support for 4D sound are there to finish off the realism factor of WLS '99.

Although much has changed from the original game, World League Soccer '99 still offers the playability that shone through before. However, it now looks and plays better as a game of football and is far more accessible to everybody, and not just hardened football game fans. Michael Owen's endorsement may help to sell the game, but just remember that no matter how good a footballer he is, he can't actually make this game any better. That's up to Eidos and Silicon Dreams, and it looks as though they may just have scored.

"...WLS '99 has two modes of play, one for beginners and another for more experienced or daring players..."

BOTTOM LEFT TO RIGHT: The sunlight/shadow effect on the pitch is about as realistic as it gets on PlayStation football games; we're playing world class soccer here, so why do these teams look as if they are populated by porkers?

Michael Owens World League Soccer '99

Publisher: Eidos

Developer: Silicon Dreams

Release Date: Nov '98

Game Type: Soccer Sim.

PAL Percentage Complete 80%

The Early Verdict

Michael Owens World League Soccer '99: For

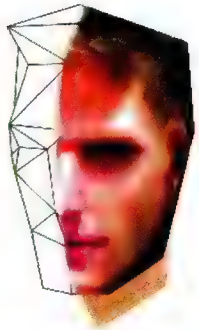
WLS '99 improves over the original game in a number of different ways. First and foremost is the graphical improvement – the game now runs in hi-res mode and looks sumptuous. There are also two playing modes, so that beginners won't be daunted by the challenge that WLS '99 offers.

Michael Owens World League Soccer '99: Against

It may be running in high-res mode, but at the moment the players all look like they've eaten too many pies. This is particularly hilarious in the pre-match line-up, where all of the players look like Gazza instead of top class athletes.

Anticipation Rating 85%

It's not the biggest of the forthcoming football titles, but if it's judged by the last game's playability, it could cause a stir.



Concept Description

Take one of the best of last year's crop of soccer games and give it a graphical and gameplay overhaul.

Eccentric depressives

Green-haired suicidal fur-balls invade the land of Sony at a time when we thought they'd become extinct. The once-loveable creatures adorned almost every format but now aim to reclaim their popularity.

Lemmings

Publisher: Psygnosis

Developer: Distinctive Develop.

Release Date: 6th November

Game Type: 2D Puzzler

PAL Percentage Complete **80%**

The Early Verdict

Lemmings: For

Lemmings has already established a huge following from its early days on the Amiga. The plot is simple, eight buttons should ensure an easier playing experience, and the starsof the show are, oh so sweet...

Lemmings: Against

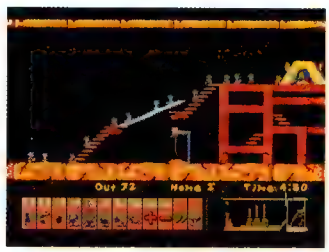
Videogaming has progressed way beyond the original Lemmings software. Retro games are making a comeback, but they are multi-title products. Lemmings isn't.

Anticipation Rating 40%

Today's current climate of high-tech software may have developed far beyond the once-great Lemmings style. However, the seemingly endless amount of levels and some laugh-a-minute frolics could ensure a sustained lifespan.

Concept Description

PREVENT suicidal creatures from killing themselves... where's the fun in that?!

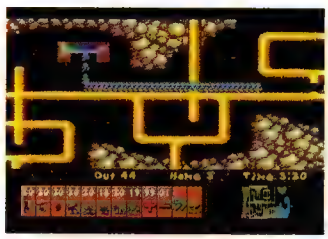


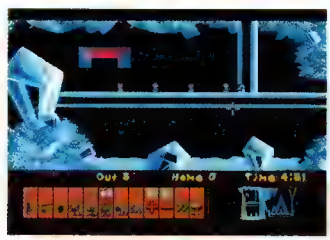
FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: Like a bridge over... Love will build a... And so on!; if the cold doesn't freeze them, those large hanging icicles look ominous; sometimes there is a clue as to which direction you should be heading.

Are our brains going to explode? Judging by the current surge in puzzle games, and with strenuous cranial activity having to be employed regularly, it seems as though it just might happen. These teasers are churning out of the development offices in many different guises. Balls, blocks and coloured blobs have all had successful console appearances, and now a return of an old favourite suggests we should anticipate more sleepless nights. Back in the days when Amigas duelled religiously with Atari STs, in the same vein as Sony do with Nintendo today, Lemmings was soaring in popularity. The combination of tireless, suicidal animals intent on the destruction of their own species and the gamer's quest to prevent them from doing so gave you the chance to play god in a wonderful platform-puzzler brimming with fun and laughter amidst a tragic storyline. Well, Psygnosis have endeavoured to bring back the classic and rejuvenate the appeal.

The 32-bit console version looks and plays pretty much in the same way as its past renditions. That is because it is no more than a translated version of them. A compilation of Lemmings software that made us all feel so jolly, all those years ago. You guide a multitude of the hapless, manic depressant mammals through a host of hazardous levels fraught with danger, whilst utilising their different skills in the process... simple? Not really. If you are unfamiliar with the format, you will not know that there are loads of these bleedin' things rambling around in any direction they want. Expect to encounter constant button pressing and frequent cursor action as you strive to hold back relentless tides of fur. Animal lovers on a crusade to save the little blighters will be horrified to hear the soul-torturing screaming, as the harmless cuties fall to their doom or explode into many furry pieces. So there is no doubt that they, above all other PSX owners, will be wanting to know more about the quest in the future... Be prepared to fight for the fur, lemming lovers!

"Guide a multitude of hapless, manic depressant mammals through a host of hazardous levels."





Monkey business

Classic Hong Kong TV programming has finally arrived on the PlayStation. Although there is no official licence, only a real monkey would not realise where Take 2 have divined their inspiration from.

FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: **Monkey can interact with characters whenever he approaches them; as is the case with most RPGs from the Eastern lands, colour and cute characters are well represented.**

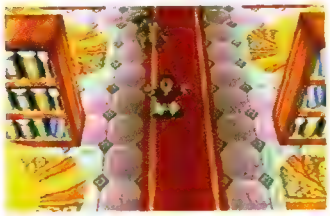
"Aah Pigsy!" There are few animals spread over the globe that are more popular than the monkey. Whilst in the Western world we tend to see this creature as little more than a diminutive clown, 'aping' our human characteristics, in the East the monkey is often worshipped and treated with great respect. Whether this respect will translate onto the PlayStation remains to be seen, as an unusual and strangely familiar ape becomes the subject of a colourful software title from the Hasbro Interactive development team. Looking noticeably similar to the cult Hong Kong television series Monkey, Monkey Hero places you in a vast Eastern land in search of a mystical book with peace-keeping powers.

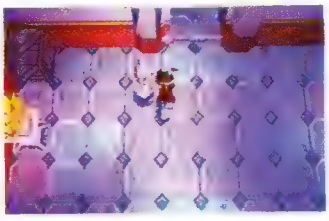
The game plays like the majority of RPGs that come out of Japan – bright, colourful graphics work in tandem with cute characters. A *Final Fantasy*-style top-down viewpoint is used, and the usual selection of cheesy Oriental music is there to help the whole thing along. Our monkey hero holds a solitary wooden staff for protection, and has the ability to throw large spears and dynamite, hidden inconspicuously in his trouser pockets. Helpful aids in the form of magic scrolls and onions are collected on a puzzle-intensive journey that is moulded in typical role-playing style.

Planet Of The Apes

As fond memories may suggest, the likeness to the original TV series is quite striking. The TV simian donned a red robe and a golden crown, much the same as the one in Monkey Hero, though, officially, the game has no relation to the show. Some aspects of the TV programme may well have been inspirational for the Take 2 software, but there is no licence involved. This really is a bit of shame, as it heads into direct market confrontation with *Final Fantasy VIII* and would benefit from any help it can get. I think it may be time for a little of that monkey magic.

"Looking similar to the cult Hong Kong television series Monkey Hero places you in a vast Eastern land in search of a mystical book."





Monkey Hero

Publisher: Take 2

Developer: Hasbro Interactive

Release Date: November

Game Type: RPG

PAL Percentage Complete 70%

The Early Verdict

Monkey Hero: For

Has a remarkable similarity to the Hong Kong TV show, Monkey. The first level alone is as big as they come.

Monkey Hero: Against

Far too easy to play, the player doesn't feel involved. First impressions suggest it will take a clubbing from the giant that is *Final Fantasy VIII*.

Anticipation Rating 60%

There are some brilliant RPGs on the PlayStation at present, many of which are far more superior to what we've seen of Monkey Hero so far. The excitement isn't generated like some RPGs manage to.

Concept Description

A *Final Fantasy* adventure with a simian superstar.

That Voodoo that you do

"Voodoo magic, man..." Wax effigies, strange incantations and headless chickens. Must be Eidos' forthcoming 3D adventure, Akuji The Heartless.

Akuji the Heartless

Publisher: Eidos

Developer: Crystal Dynamics

Release Date: December

Game Type: Action/Adventure

PAL Percentage Complete **60%**

The Early Verdict

Akuji the Heartless: For

Crystal have again attempted to approach the tired third-person genre from a fresh perspective, using such elements as voodoo sacrifice and undead heroes to attempt to break the *Tomb Raider* mode.

Akuji the Heartless: Against

Some of the visuals are looking a little shoddy, as are the character animations. The substance is there, but unless these graphics are improved, few will take the time to notice.

Anticipation Rating 30%

Considering its pending release, very little has been penned about this title. Obviously it's not the highest priority on Eidos' fourth quarter release schedule, so what does that say to you?

Concept Description

Shaft sells his soul to the Devil.

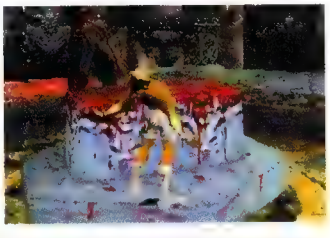
Betrayal, true love, and death - it's not just happening in Corronation Street. It's all over the world of Akuji The Heartless, star of Crystal Dynamics' latest third-person adventure. Akuji earned his moniker not by being a Steve McDonald-like love-rat with the ladies, but for a far more literal reason. On his wedding day, his jealous brother Orad, took part in an improvised heart transplant by tearing out his vitals. Orad then kidnapped the wife-to-be, and set about unleashing the forces of evil upon their peaceful land. Condemned to Hell, the heartless Akuji awakes in the dominion of darkness, seeking revenge and a bit part in Corrie, before the dreaded Orad has his wicked way. His only chance of freedom is to collect of the spirits of his late ancestors, and use their power to break the barrier between Hell and his home.

Akuji The Heartless is a 3D third-person adventure, its setting is a world whose lifeblood is voodoo. An ancient African blend of religion and folklore, voodoo is a powerful and much-feared element of popular myth. This magic flows strongly through the veins of Akuji and provides him with his strongest offensive attribute, something that will come in very handy no doubt. During his fourteen-level journey through Hell, the player will be called upon to do battle with over 30 enemies. The more traditional approach of getting stuck in with your fists remains an option, but the use of magic and spell casting will also serve to up the body count. From basic possession to the summoning of demons, Akuji has this voodoo business tied right up.

In amongst the combat, riddles must be solved and objects located before success is achieved. Visually, the title is currently looking as pleasant as some of its undead inhabitants, yet we will refrain from making any rash observations until the final code is delivered. This said, the rendered sequences are excellent and suitably dark in tone. Although it remains unconfirmed at the time of going to press, Crystal have made suggestions that the voice of Akuji will be provided by none other than Shaft himself, Richard Roundtree. This will certainly make an interesting little inclusion, although sadly his Afro and movie theme tune will not make the final code.

"From basic possession to the summoning of demons, Akuji has this voodoo business tied right up."

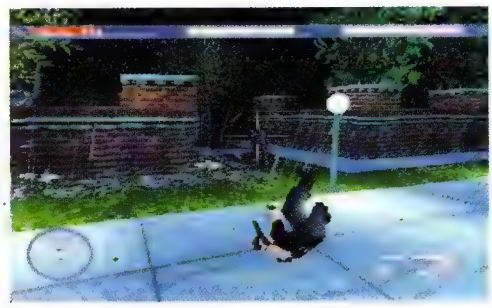
The market is hardly crying out for yet another third-person romp, yet Crystal Dynamics' recent releases have been hard to fault and do much to increase perceptions of the game's quality. However, we can't help feeling that Akuji is going to have to work some serious magic if he wants to compete with the big boys this Christmas.



ABOVE: **The completely macbre nature of the plot is reflected beatifully in the game's moody and atmosphereic settings.**

Eye spy with my little...

'Stealth' seems to be one of the buzz-words in gaming at the moment. Integrate it with an espionage storyline and plot from a spy novel and what do you get? Syphon Filter.



FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: **Gabe has an impressive array of moves. He can walk, run, jump, crawl and go down on bended knee... helpful: an excellent forward roll. Quick, sue the council. It was that loose paving stone!**

Hunt, stalk and destroy. For those of you who become excited at the mere mention of those words, or harbour a secret passion for stealthily tracking assailants amongst the backdrop of a political underworld, then Syphon Filter could be right up your alley. So to speak. The latest espionage romp to cavort with the Sony offers both fast explosive 'all guns blazing' action, or a more restrained and tactical approach to the task in question.

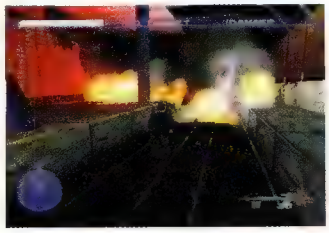
With the freedom of an open, real-time 3D playing environment, players take up the role of Gabe Logan, an unfamiliar hero with a mission to save mankind. The plot is as common as one would associate with any espionage thriller. Washington D.C. have issued you with a briefing that a terrorist group have a deployment of biological weaponry. Apparently, there is such an arsenal of these chemical destructives that the whole planet is under threat, and there is only room for one hero. Answers on a postcard, please.

Smoke Me a Kipper

Developers 989 studios have created Syphon Filter in the same manner we would expect of your average Hollywood epic. Dazzling special effects and a plot fuelled with conspiracy, intrigue and political subterfuge propel action that would seem more at home on the big screen. The only things missing seem to be the glamorous scantily clad women and the frequent cocktail party dialogue.

Syphon Filter promises to be one of the most realistic action adventures so far, featuring some dynamic lighting and a real-world within which to flaunt your firearm skills. Sexy Scottish accents will not be a necessity, but a cool trigger finger and a stomach for excessive gin and tonic sessions probably will be. Next year seems sure to be a big hit with James Bond wannabes the world over.

"Dazzling special effects and a plot fuelled with conspiracy, intrigue and political subterfuge propel the action"



Syphon Filter

Publisher: Sony

Developer: 989 Studios

Release Date: 1st Quarter '99

Game Type: 3D Adventure

PAL Percentage Complete 50%

The Early Verdict

Syphon Filter: For

All the thrills and spills one would associate with espionage, played amidst an impressive environment, boasting special effects that would put many a game to shame.

Syphon Filter: Against

Up against some tasty competition. Metal Gear Solid will provide the severest test.

Anticipation Rating 70%

Although it looks like another top-notch piece of software from the home brigade, consumers have hardly heard a dicky bird about it, as yet.

Concept Description

Stealth fighting for the more strategic James Bond wannabes.

Got some pucka gear

Pulled from the clutches of the Japanese-only market, Electronic Arts have purchased the rights to Squaresoft's Xenogears. An unconventional RPG epic that promises to break the rules of the genre. Sounds a little risky.

Xenogears

Publisher: EA

Developer: Squaresoft

Release Date: 1st Quarter

Game Type: Action/RPG

PAL Percentage Complete 25%

The Early Verdict

Xenogears: For

Xenogears injects some new ideas into the genre, and is packed to the gills with great big robots – which we all agree are pretty cool as well.

Xenogears: Against

The graphics are not in keeping with the usual high standards now expected from any Squaresoft titles. Only a minor niggle, but after *Final Fantasy VII*, expectations are a little too high, resulting in possible disappointment.

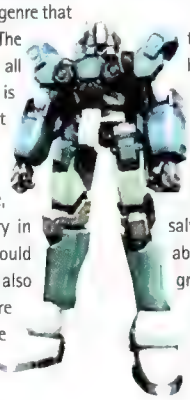
Anticipation Rating 70%

Having suffered numerous delays, the English language version is finally nearing completion. Expect the hype machine to go into overdrive any day now! Alas, this is destined to be unfairly dwarfed by the huge *Final Fantasy VIII*.

Concept Description

Big droids and little blokes tell an epic tale.

Mechanised mega-bots star in this new adventure from the developers of *Final Fantasy VIII* – Xenogears. Taking two of the key elements of Japanese entertainment, Manga cartoons and large robots, they have blended this duo into the gaming genre that moistens the underpants of the nation, the RPG. The product spawned from the above has yen spinner written all over it, but its appeal outside the land of the Rising Sun is less assured. The vast tale of a land torn apart by conflict and the continuing struggle for supremacy between two rival fractions smacks of Japanese cliché.

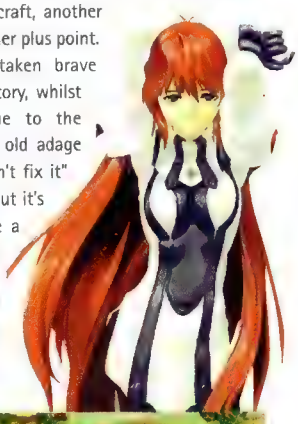


Although the plot is pretty much more of the same, the code incorporates military robots and machinery in place of typecast wizards and knights, a factor that could quite likely divide any potential audience. The game also replaces the realistic visuals of *Parasite Eve* with a more stylised Anime design. Although the effect of the reduction in visuals is not quite as detrimental as it first sounds, the end result is far from what one would expect from such aesthetically gifted developers.

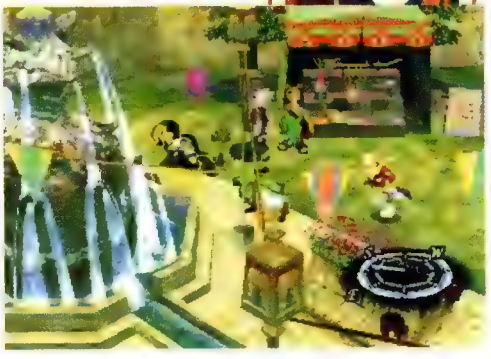
The Manga style is also represented in the many linking cut scenes, created from traditional cell animation, Tom and Jerry style in laymen terms, complete with full voice acting. These sequences inspire memories of such big screen classics as *Akira* and *Ghost in the Shell*, a perfect compliment and a measure of the quality of these mini-movies.

The combat system has also taken a few liberties with the Squaresoft rulebook, the battles taking place within huge *Mech Warrior*-esque droids with the player entering a series of button combinations to produce various offensive actions. The given effect is that of a turn-based beat-'em-up and is actually a very well conceived and most promising original. The genre standby of Experience Points have been replaced by the salvaging of destroyed robotic vehicles, thus increasing the ability of the player's craft, another great touch and a further plus point.

Xenogears has taken brave steps into new territory, whilst still remaining true to the genre. However the old adage of "if it ain't broke, don't fix it" does spring to mind. Sorry, but it's a very tough job not to be a little sceptical.



"This product has yen spinner written all over it, but its appeal outside the land of the Rising Sun is less assured."



LEFT TO RIGHT: The visuals spring to life during the battle sequences, adding to their already massive appeal; the player can choose to play as any of the characters from the group of merry heroes in their control.

To the beat of the drum

The world has fallen into decline, and rogue bands of warriors roam the wasteland that makes up the backdrop for Tribal, a futuristic sporting romp.

LEFT TO RIGHT: The level design allows just enough room to let the action hot up, whilst avoiding confusion; transparent and lighting effects are employed to add a little extra gloss to the already nifty 3D engine.

Raging against the machine is the goal of all teenagers, be it partaking in a sly tab behind the bikeshed or raiding their parents' drinks cabinet, at one time or another we've all wanted to be a rebel like James Dean. Thankfully, as we grow older, this desire to rebel against the system is soon forgotten in favour of dirt cheap cider and young ladies. Yet as the line goes: "the more things change, the more they stay the same". This same teenage angst has been placed in a futuristic setting by US developers Radical Entertainment and forms the basis for their pseudo-sports simulation - Tribal.

Tribal appears to be making its moves in all the right directions. Even this early build offers an impressive glance at this fiendishly playable game which is yet to be properly optimised. Set in multi-level arenas, the concept is refreshingly simple – change the colour of the four beacons that light each area to the colour of your player. The ability to claim one of the said beacons is the key, as each can only be controlled by a single player, thus requiring the employ of some combat moves. Various add-ons and power-ups can be recovered on each level, these can be employed to temporarily incapacitate an opponent and steal their essential colour-changing power.

"Tribal has held our attention a great deal longer than many of the titles we have recently received. Make of that what you will."

The future is really not a very pleasant place to live. All as all of its inhabitants are completely dominated by the military governing body. These unhappy citizens are finding that their lives are no longer their own as any forms of freedom of expression have been completely denied them. Unhappy with their lot, a faction of rogue youths, like futuristic James Deans, have made their stands and have broken out of their normal existence, to compete in 'capture the flag' styled battles against one another, each hoping that they will be able to claim the ultimate title of champion.

Lost The Plot?

The use of plot in a sports romp has never been a necessary element, gameplay will always remain king, and in this area

The aesthetic quality of Tribal is nothing short of impressive, with the level and character design creating some remarkably memorable scenes. The cast list of characters stretches from Scotland to South America, with each one's style and vocals mirroring their origins. An intriguing if a little unnecessary inclusion is the use of a taunt button, allowing the player to play a random sample from their character's list, which is very annoying to say the least.

Ignoring this minor glitch, Tribal has held our attention a great deal longer than many of the titles we have recently received. Make of that what you will.

Tribal

Publisher: Sony

Developer: Radical Ent.

Release Date: Nov '98

Game Type: Future Sports Sim.

PAL Percentage Complete **65%**

The Early Verdict

Tribal: For

The extremely fast-paced gameplay borders upon the addictive. Surprisingly complex but instantly playable and garnished with some fantastic visuals, Tribal has taken us completely by surprise.

Tribal: Against

The combat elements are a little over-developed in this early build, making tackling an opponent way too tricky. The long-zoom camera angle is a little hard on the eyes, but neither are particularly damaging to the game as a whole.

Anticipation Rating 30%

Having received very little exposure in the industry press, very few will have even heard of this potential winner, yet hopefully this will change before the game plummets into the nation's bargain bins.

Concept Description

Capture the futuristic flag pausing only to knee people in the groin.

My name is Kane

Tekken 3's dominance over the beat-'em-up genre has had an unexpected effect upon the development of software, namely an injection of originality. The first title to break with tradition is THQ's four-on-four combat/action adventure Shao Lin - but is the market ready?

Shaolin

Publisher: **THQ**

Developer: **Polygon Magic**

Release Date: **1st Quarter '99**

Game Type: **Beat-'em-up**

PAL Percentage Complete **50%**

The Early Verdict

Shao Lin: For

Four-player simultaneous kung-fu antics are something that gamesplayers have been waiting for. Extremely good fun and the multiplayer possibilities are endless. Doesn't look like the solitary player has been forgotten either.

Shao Lin: Against

The combat engine is a little limited, not to worry though because it's not as if gameplay is the most important factor. By the way, that was sarcasm. Address this or the product will fail.

Anticipation Rating 60%

Picking up a little momentum since the original announcement, those old enough to remember the beat-'em-up classic IK+ will no doubt be counting the days, alas younger gamers will need a tad more encouragement.

Concept Description

Four players knocking the seven bells of shite out of one another.

Bald-headed, ass-kicking holy men - this is the first description that springs to mind of the ancient Chinese warrior monks of the Order of the Shaolin. These highly trained martial artists were made minor stars in the mid-70's by countless chop socky flicks and the long-running TV show "Kung Fu". Although strictly comicbook in its approach, David Carradine's low-key performance as the gentle, banished Shaolin disciple Kane, and the upbeat pace of the action, made this Shaolin monk the perfect subject-matter for software development. Alas, it was not to be, and these ancient heroes were overlooked in favour of far safer bets, the Kens and Ryus of the genre.

Sadly, Kane and his cueball mates have been confined to the recesses of our minds, hidden below a pile of dead beer-encrusted and drug-soaked brain cell and, seemingly gone forever. At last, these fond memories have been released by THQ's beat-'em-up Shao Lin, allowing up to four players to enter the fray and do the Shaolin necessary, without having to shave their heads and bang a tambourine. The simultaneous multiplayer battles are the most attractive of the gameplay prospects, fortunately equal time has been spent developing the single-player modes of play too.

The main stumbling blocks of this genre are the limitations imposed upon the lone pugilist. To combat this, Shao Lin features a unique "Quest" mode, seeing the player embark on an action/RPG inspired adventure. The objectives of the quest are to find the locations of six martial arts masters, who once found will reveal their teachings. As a result of their schooling, the player will gain access to a completely new style of kung fu, which once mastered, will become selectable in all other play modes. Maintaining the furious nature of the multiplayer game, the single player will often be confronted with up to nine opponents at a single time, making those newly acquired skills a godsend, and most importantly, sending action levels through the roof!

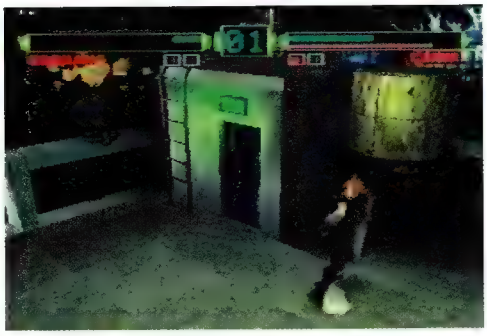
What Shao Lin lacks in hair it appears to make up for in gameplay options and style, and who can resist the temptations of four-on-four action in any shape or form?

What Shao Lin lacks in hair it appears to make up for in gameplay options and style, and who can resist the temptations of four-on-four action in any shape or form? Look to future issues for further enlightenment, Grasshopper.

FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: **Opponents can be knocked off the edge of the level, yet the character will clutch to the edge and pull themselves to safety; grapples and throws will play an important role in the proceedings.**

God bless the ring

Think Namco, think beat-'em-up, think Squaresoft, think RPG. What could an intriguing union between these producers of quality software produce? A beat-'em-up/role playing romp entitled Ergheiz.



LEFT TO RIGHT: Every nook and cranny of a level can be explored, but take care as nowhere is safe from attack; the weapon attacks vary from one character to another, the range covers the expected swords, guns and of course, yoyos.

Second only to the jam-packed racing genre, the beat-'em-up genre is responsible for unleashing a huge amount of complete cack upon the unsuspecting PlayStation fan. The more discerning gamers have opted to give the genre a wide birth, unwilling to part with the necessary notes for anything less than the cream of the crop, and with *Tekken 3* topping the market, developers would be ill-advised to approach the genre without a real stunner in tow.

The basic plot revolves around the capture of a mythical gem-studded sword, blatant theft from Namco's *Soul Blade* – said to hold the key to immortality, a worthy goal. Thankfully, the gameplay is far less clichéd than the plot structure that upholds it. Free roaming environments house the furious hand-to-hand and weapon-based combat, with player movement being a truly three dimensional affair, allowing movement in all directions and also upon differing heights. The arena design incorporates multi-levelled locations and various hazards, similar in style to Squaresoft's *Bushido Blade*.

"With *Tekken 3* topping the market, developers would be ill-advised to approach the genre without a real stunner in tow."

That said, the next big beat-'em-up title to hit the shelves has 'stonker' written all over it – especially as it has the backing of both RPG experts Squaresoft and the combat kings Namco. Their co-produced Ergheiz has already appeared, to much praise, in Japan's arcades. Even in the light of this hot reception, the forthcoming PlayStation conversion will not only feature a straight conversion of the coin-op but also be even further enhanced with a semi-RPG quest option. This play mode, which is yet to be titled, incorporates elements from the genres that made both of these prestigious companies famous. Fighting will obviously remain one of the key elements of gameplay, but between each bout the player will be able to take part in various subgames, thus gaining more experience points and further combat abilities to aid them in their adventure – all of which belies shades of the RPG.

The influence of Namco, and its experience in coin-ops is clearly noticeable in both the character design and the instinctive and fast-paced gameplay, which remains surprisingly faithful to the arcade code. In fact, the coin-op character roster has survived the conversion process in its entirety, with the PSX code even managing to squeeze in some new additions that will be very familiar to fans of a certain RPG epic from Squaresoft.

The delicious prospect of the coming together of two of the most influential and successful software houses upon the planet must spell success for Ergheiz. With the potential of the early code that we've already played pointing in rather positive directions, God bless the ring indeed.

Ergheiz

Publisher: Sony

Developer: Squaresoft

Release Date: TBC

Game Type: Beat-'em-up

PAL Percentage Complete 20%

The Early Verdict

Ergheiz: For

When such big name players as Namco and Squaresoft become bedpartners, beautiful music will be made, won't it?

Ergheiz: Against

Currently unannounced for European distribution, could this go the same way as much-troubled *Tobal 2*?

Anticipation Rating 40%

Its very limited arcade run is unlikely to have promoted the game, but the inclusion of key members of the *FFVII* team to the character rankings will help push things in the right direction.

Concept Description

RPG meets beat-'em-up with a little help from Squaresoft and Namco.

Played and Rated

[54] F1 '98 [58] Abe's Exoddus [62] The Fifth Element [70] O.D.T [72] Unholy War [76] Spyro the Dragon [78] Bust-A-Groove
[80] B-Movie [81] V2000 [82] SMALL REVIEWS: San Francisco Rush G-Darius S.C.A.R.S Master of Monsters
[84] Brave Fencer [IMPORT] [86] Gunbart (Point Blank 2) [IMPORT]

Don't judge a book by its cover

The final ratings awarded to games in Station are presented as percentages. We have chosen this system for two reasons: it is the industry standard and research has shown it's the preferred method of scoring for both consumers and retailers alike.

90-100%
The gaming equivalent of the complete works of Shakespeare. If the famous bard hadn't been a playwright, he would have been head of production on this game.

80-89%
Akin to Charles Dickens' Oliver Twist. A book adored by everybody, but no matter how great Dickens was, he could never be Shakespeare.

70-79%
Katherine Cookson could easily have produced this game. It's populist yet something about it, a flaw or lack of originality, lets it down.

60-69%
We're getting into Tom Clancy territory here because you really need to be into the style of the game to overlook its down-points.

50-59%
Irvine Welsh books are an acquired taste, much like the games in this bracket. A flashy, stylistic box or front end may lead to dashed hopes when you delve into the contents.

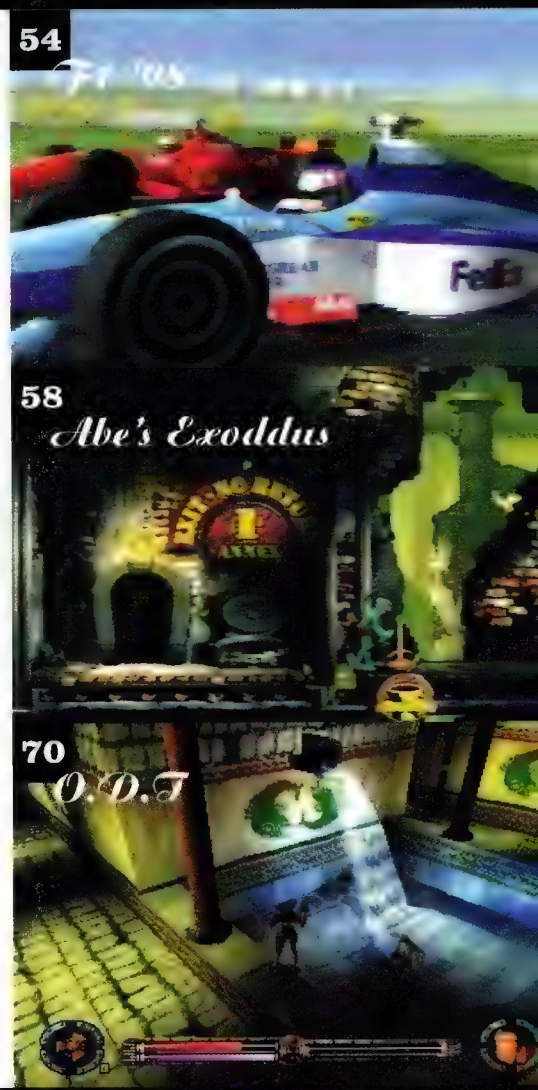
40-49%
This game may have been written by Roald Dahl but let's face it, no matter how great his books are, you wouldn't rush to Dillon's to buy his latest nowadays would you?

30-39%
Like the Sunday Sport, games here may have one slightly redeeming feature, there's nothing that would make us buy it though. Borrow your mates copy instead.

20-29%
Games here can be likened to those autobiographies written by second rate sportsmen. They may have something to say, but who really cares?

10-19%
About as much fun and satisfaction as reading the Highway Code with the paint drying on the wall at the library. The paint's probably a horrible colour too.

0-9%
The equivalent of a charity leaflet shoved through your letterbox on a Sunday.



Trust the Triple A

The Triple A stamp is our personal guarantee to you that this game means business. We promise that everyone – apart from the most pedantic buffoons – will reap months, if not years of enjoyment from it. The gameplay is unsurpassable, the visuals put Leonardo Da Vinci to shame and the sound has been lovingly caressed by the ghost of Amadeus. Perfection is subjective, therefore a perfect game can never exist, but a Triple A award is as close as it gets.

Talking Pages

Here is a quick guide to what to expect on the pages of Station's Played and Rated section:

SCORE
This is what you're looking for. This is the country's most respected PlayStation magazine score: 100% unofficial, 100% unbiased, 100% honest!

OUT OF 100
87

PLUS/MINUS
Two reasons why you should consider this game, two reasons why you should be wary.

+ In-depth and thoughtful gameplay.
+ Superb Eastern soundtrack.
- The camera comes unstuck at times.
- Some frustrating gameplay elements.

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"Jagged, badly defined characters a poor attempt at creating an atmospheric playing environment offers your eyeballs little pleasure."

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"All becomes clear as you begin to experience the combat in the setting it was designed for."

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"Although Bust A Groove introduces a wide array of dancing styles, the player is limited to only a small amount of combinations and dance steps."

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POCKET FIGHTERS
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"More speed than the Freak Brothers have had in their whole lives."

R-TYPES
"For thirty quid, you get R-Type and R-Type 2."

84 Brave Fencer [IMPORT]
"Squaresoft's valiant attempt at merging the styles of two of the PlayStation's top titles."

86 Gunbarl [IMPORT]
"Never play with guns, it's how accidents happen."

F1 '98

The wait is over and we've finally got our hands on the review code of F1 '98. Was it worth the wait though? We reckon it was because what we have here is more than a sequel, it's almost a completely different game.

ABE'S EXODDUS

Oddworld Inhabitants have outdone themselves again with the much heralded sequel to Abe's Oddysee. Abe's Exoddus is more of the same again, but when the first game was so good, why change it?

SPYRO THE DRAGON

Sony's latest hope to break into the world of platform icons comes in the form of a cute little dragon. It may not be the best character for the now more mature PlayStation market, but it's still a great game.

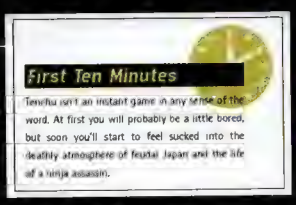
THE FIFTH ELEMENT

Luc Besson's futuristic sci-fi film was one of the best-looking cinema experiences of last year, so Kalisto's interpretation for the PlayStation has got a lot to live up to. It's got Leeloo's bandage dress though, so there's a start.

ICONS
Does the game utilise any peripherals: steering wheel, Dual Shock pad, memory card etc.

THE COMPETITION
Life is full of choices. Whatever the review score, there may be an alternative to the game in question, and this is where you will find it.

FIRST TEN MINUTES
Do first impressions really count? Is it love at first sight or instant repulsion? Find out here.



F1 '98

Formula 1 fans have been waiting eagerly for the release of F1 '98 for some time now. We've finally got our hands on a copy, but was it really worth the wait? Hmmm...

LEFT TO RIGHT: Once you've grasped the controls, the racing becomes much more exciting as you are able to start thinking about the car in front, and not just getting around the next corner; does this shot prove that all I've said about the cornering was wrong? Not at all – one second after taking this shot of trying an outside line I was driving across the gravel trap. Not good; going through the famous tunnel on the Monaco track is not a pretty sight.

A twelve car pile-up, two high speed, low visibility crashes, Michael Schumacher trying to punch David Coulthard's lights out and Damon Hill victorious in an under-powered Jordan. Psygnosis couldn't have asked for a better race than this year's Spa Grand prix in Belgium to boost interest in what had become a predictable and tiresome Formula 1 season. With races as action-packed as this, Pysgnosis' F1 '98 can't fail then, can it?

It's not actually that cut and dry though, for F1 '98 has been programmed by a new team and not Iguana, who produced the last two F1 games. The new team, Visual Sciences, have taken the blueprint of F1 '97 and tried to add their own slant on the Iguana produced game. Which I'm afraid, has not improved it in the slightest.

The problems lie in the car handling, which requires you to be almost pixel perfect throughout a race. This is obviously what we aim for, but there really is no room for error. At times you might as well be playing Scalextric, because if you don't follow a particular line at a particular speed and angle, you will undoubtedly fly off the track. This is of course about as realistic as you can get; in real Formula 1 there is absolutely no room for error when travelling at two hundred miles an hour in nothing more than a large bullet with wheels and a race tuned engine.

Zero Tolerance

Why am I complaining then? Because zero tolerance to mistakes does not always translate well to a game. F1 '97, and most other driving games, allow you to take corners as smoothly or as raggedy as you like. This allows for some personality in your driving, and at least you have the opportunity to take chances with a small probability of getting through unscathed. F1 '98 though hardly gives you a chance – stick to that line, get your speed correct and through you go, or not as the case may be. Bloody Scalextric, I tell ya!

We've all had a lot of fun on Scalextric, haven't we though? And although the whole thing feels a little contrived, you get masses of satisfaction from F1 '98 when you finally do crack it. It's simply that as players we don't want to be pointed in exactly the right

F1 '98	
Publisher:	Psygnosis
Developer:	Visual Sciences
Release Date:	Nov '98
Game Type:	Racing
No of Players:	1-4
Price:	£44.99

LEFT TO RIGHT: Carnage starts are a regular occurrence, but when the computer controlled cars don't all crash, you're treated to a rather spectacular sight; the starts are tough enough as it is but wait until you try to overtake on the infamous Monaco start straight.

First Ten Minutes

The feel of the car has been changed so it will take you a while to get to grips with it. This leads to you thinking that F1 '98 is the proverbial bag-o-shite, but a little perseverance will eventually bring out the best of it.

Link, Split or Both

Something that F1 '98 does have over it's predecessor is the ability to produce a fast, four-player split screen link-up. Surprisingly, little is lost in terms of speed or graphical detail but plenty is gained in the playability department. The four-player mode is one of the only real innovations that Visual Sciences have given F1 '98. But at least it's one area where they have excelled.

Compatibility

LEFT TO RIGHT: Looking behind can cause a certain amount of hassle if you're using the analog pad as you have to pull down on the d-pad to do so; Many of the views are basically unusable. This is usually due to the fact that it's almost impossible to see the corners as they loom up.

Turning Circles

One of the biggest flaws in F1 '98 is that the cars simply don't turn enough. This means that to get around the course at any decent speed you have to basically follow the racing line inch by inch. It's not so bad on the straights. You can swerve out and overtake or get yourself in a better position but once you've missed the extremely small window of opportunity for getting a corner right, you really have no chance of making it. There is a way to get better turning action out of your car though; set your front and rear down-force as high as it will possibly go. You do lose speed but it makes cornering a little easier.

LEFT TO RIGHT: The rendered intro isn't up to the usual Psygnosis standards. Everything seems to be okay but it just hasn't got the style and punch that we're used to from the usual Psygnosis intros.

direction for a perfect lap in an all-or-nothing fashion. A little leeway would have been much appreciated.

The reason that this one line and one line only gameplay is here is because the cars actually have very minimal turning circles. So much so that it's actually impossible to get around some corners without slowing down to about ten mph, and by Formula 1 standards, this is basically going in reverse. Tracks like Monaco, which used to be a joy to race, have now become almost un-playable due to this problem, and even if they were trying for realism Visual Sciences should have realised that changes had to be made to make it work as a game. Although the car handling can be tamed, more effort should have gone into it in the first place.

Artificial Intelligence?

Artificial Intelligence is often the mainstay of a racing game but it has to be said that the two previous F1 games haven't really excelled in this department. Cars stopping on corners in huge traffic jams, drivers ramming each other for no apparent reason and starts that look as though they were inspired by a Smokey & The Bandit film. Visual Science had the opportunity to fix most of this on F1 '98, and although to an extent they have, most of the above AI nuances are still here, just to a lesser degree. You still find yourself caught up in pointless traffic at the start, you still ram stationary cars as they wait to round a corner, and you're still rammed yourself by kamikaze drivers who feel that you're in their way. This is not Touring Cars!

Which brings me onto another nasty little barb that F1 '98 holds in store; the crashing physics. Of course if you're driving the way that the game wants you to you don't need to worry about a shunt. Once you do crash, you realise that as much as the driving is realistic, the crashing is not. It must be an extremely subjective job to create realistic crashing physics but a few wheels leaving the ground and a loss of speed isn't realistic in my book.

The above are just a few problems that I have found whilst playing F1. Some of them serious, some of them dismissable. As much as it pains me to say it though, I actually enjoy playing F1 '98. Why? Because when played correctly it offers an extremely realistic simulation of the fastest sport on the planet. It takes a lot of effort to actually get to this stage

TOP TO BOTTOM: Here's proof of the limitations of the cars steering in F1 '98. The start of the downhill chicane leading to the tunnel on Monaco is extremely tight, but it is possible to get around it smoothly in F1 '97. Not so in F1 '98! Even if you follow the racing line at a ridiculously slow speed you'll find it is near impossible to take this section correctly.

Fly By

If you watch Formula 1 on television you'll remember how last year the game *F1 '97* was used to illustrate each track before the race started. It's now come full circle because this option is actually available on F1 '98. The track overview gives you a simulated drive around each track whilst Martin Brundle does his best to describe each corner. Although Martin's experience isn't going to be that helpful in this game, you can still gain an insight into some of the sharper corners which is where most of the car handling problems occur.

LEFT TO RIGHT: The real in-car view is one of the best we've seen on a driving game to date. For once an in-car view where you can see the track in front; The artificial intelligence may well be a little dubious, but at least the CPU controlled cars do actually crash of their own accord.

of enjoyment though, and many of you will have dismissed F1 '98 as another dodgy sequel before you get to this stage.

Deal Clincher

The deal is clinched however, whether it's a good game or not, by the fact that this is the only Formula 1 game on the PlayStation that's endorsed by the FIA. This means you get all of the '98 teams, tracks and cars and all but one of the '98 drivers. Who's missing then? Jacques Villeneuve, of course. Peroxide party pooper.

Anyway, how does it all look though? Pretty good – in places. You see there isn't an overall graphical feel to F1 '98. Some tracks look stunning, whereas others are no more than mediocre. One thing they all have in common though is that they are all exact, scaled down replicas of the real thing. The cars themselves are very solid but they have been toned down and look less vibrant than the colour filled four-wheeled rockets from F1 '97. The whole of the game has actually been toned down, so most of the time we have less grainy, but faster moving cars and scenery.

F1 '98 conveys the feeling of the speed that a Formula 1 car can produce better than its predecessor which is probably why the cars are actually less detailed. In fact some of the high speed action is mind-blowing, especially when the weather effects come into play. Travelling at high speeds in the wet must be a terrifying experience in real life, and Visual Sciences have managed to translate this perfectly to F1 '98. When it rains, the spray from the car in front really does blind you, making you feel the danger of what it must be like in real life. This type of attention to detail occurs throughout the races and some of the driving action is unbeatable in its sense of realism and pure adrenaline production.

F1 '98 has been one of the hardest games I have ever had to review. It has flaws that could have been fixed if a little more effort and thought had gone into the production. To counter this, it offers some of the most realistic driving that I've seen in a game. Start a championship and you're bound to see it through. You feel a need to score more points and to just race one more round before you turn in for the night. It's like there's an excellent, triple 'A' game trying to get out of the shell of a half decent double 'A' game. Which is a shame, because with a licence as hot as this, and an admittedly flawed but still very playable game behind it, F1 '98 could have been the game to rival Gran Turismo for the crown of 'best racing game ever'. As it stands, F1 '98 is a classic case of potential greatness, quashed by lack of effort. Can't wait 'till F1 '99 though.

The Competition

F1 '97 -
Still the best Formula 1 game to date. Period.

Gran Turismo -
Possibly the most comprehensive racing game ever, with over 200 cars to choose from and superb handling physics.

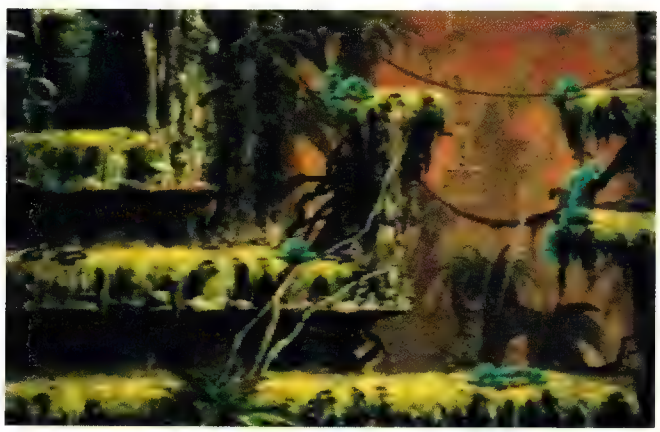
Colin McRae Rally -
It's just you against the clock, but with this much realism who needs other cars to race against?

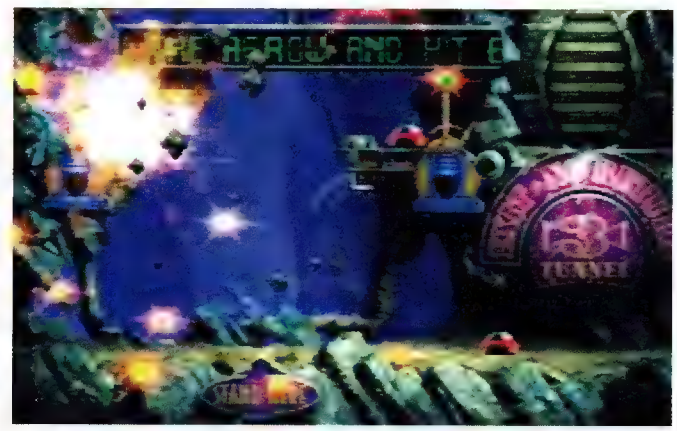
Rated by Andrew Slater

STATION	+	The stats. will pleaseFormula 1 fans.	OUT OF 100
Could have been astounding, But it's inaccessible and annoying, before it's enjoyable.	+	All real-life tracks.	80
	-	The artificial intelligence is a little dubious at times.	
	-	It really hasn't improved over F1 '97.	

ODDWORLD: ABE'S EX

The world's ugliest, yet funniest character is back in an all-new adventure from the talented Oddworld Inhabitants. But can Abe's Exoddus live up to the standards set by *Oddysee*?





Farting and burping always

gets a laugh, albeit a cheap one, but Oddworld Inhabitants' loveable ugly bug Abe has far more to his personality than a simple digestion problem. For a start, he's the chosen saviour of the Mudokon race, which may sound like a good job to you, but when it involves the perils faced in *Abe's Oddysee* and now Abe's Exoddus, the dole queue may seem luxurious in comparison. Of course, being chosen by the spirits does have its advantages, even more so in Exoddus than Abe's previous outing. For now Abe can become invisible, possess any creature he likes and even produce a volatile gaseous cloud. An exploding air biscuit if you will. We've just gone full circle...

Abe's Oddysee was originally the first in a Quintology of Oddworld games. Abe's adventures in shutting down Rupture Farms and being a general all-round hero was so popular though, that developers Oddworld Inhabitants, and

Abe's Exoddus

Publisher: GT Interactive

Developer: Oddworld Inhabitants

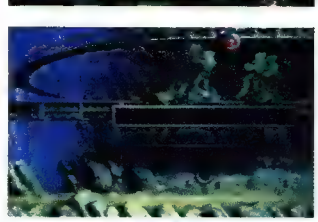
Release Date: November '98

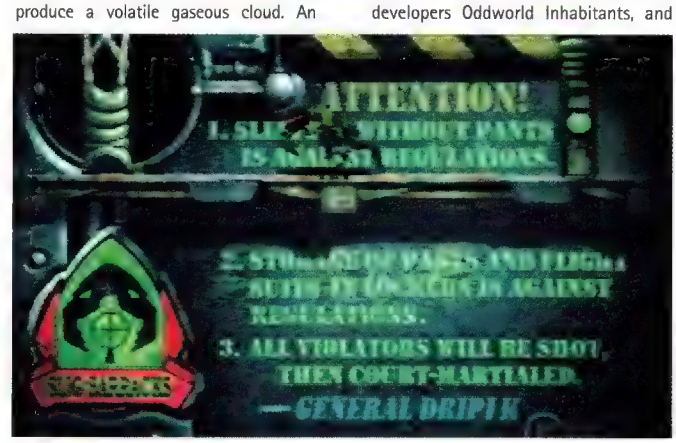
Game Type: Platform/Puzzle

No of Players: One

Price: £34.99

Compatibility





CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: You may not have a weapon, but the Sligs are itching to fill you with hot lead; you will find consoles on most levels which, when activated, offer advice on how to play, or are simply a warning from the Glukons; the Sligs are a lazy race and can often be found sleeping. Tiptoe past them to avoid waking them up.

FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: You now have the ability to get multiple Mudokons to do your bidding; this shot gives you a perfect look at the depth of the backgrounds on Abe's Exoddus; Abe is hailed as a hero for his exploits in the first game.

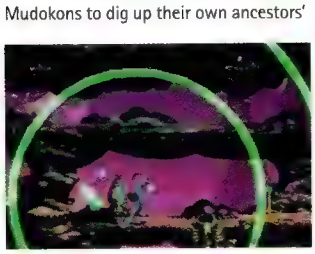
Publishers GT feel that before the second game in the Quintology, *Munch's Odyssee*, is released, Abe should have another outing.

And what an outing it is! Abe has once again been drafted in by the Mudokon spirits to defeat yet another dastardly Glukkon plan to feed off the Mudokon race. After destroying the factory in the first game, Abe is celebrating his new-found herodom, but after a gratuitous botty burp knocks him unconscious (in a roundabout way anyway) he is revisited by the spirits. This time the Glukkons have enslaved the Mudokons to dig up their own ancestors' bones, which are the vital ingredient to a much loved Glukkon drink, Soulstorm. Of course, Abe has to put a stop to this in order to save the day and keep his post as all-round good guy and local hero.

Merry Mudokons

The game starts with a sumptuous-looking and highly amusing CG movie of Abe and his band of initially merry Mudokons as they make off across the desert in search of the bone mines and the Soulstorm brewery. By lunchtime though, Abe's Mudokon mates aren't so much merry, as miserable. By tea time they've had enough and are back to the usual moaning Mudokon state. When they finally find the mines though, Abe becomes predictably separated from his pals in his own inimitable style, which is where the game begins proper.

Even from the off, Exoddus doesn't attempt to differ greatly from the original platform/puzzle format of *Oddysee*. This doesn't detract from the player's enjoyment at all though, in fact it is admirable that the Oddworld Inhabitants believed in the original format so much that they left it intact, without feeling the need to add new costumes and vehicles – which after all – do not necessarily make a sequel.



First Ten Minutes

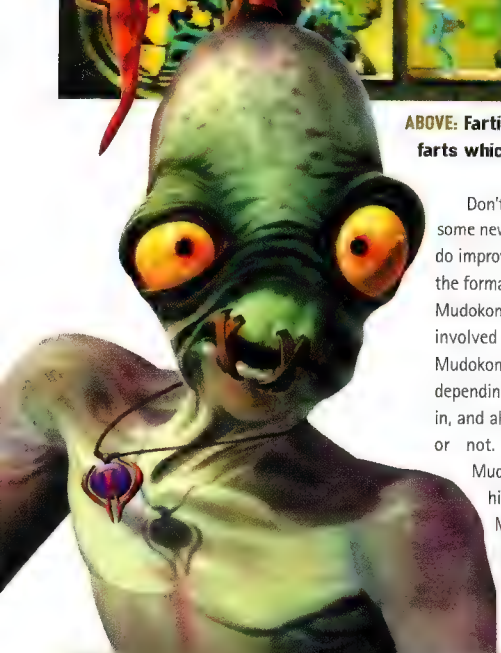
If you've played *Oddysee*, you will have experienced the superb CG animated intros and cut scenes. Well, the intro to Exoddus is even better. As for the gameplay though, it thankfully hasn't changed one iota from the original.

Mudokon Madness

The Mudokons live on Oddworld but they are not alone. Their national pastime is being oppressed. They can usually be found in some kind of enslavement in a Glukkon factory, but it wasn't always this way. The average Mudokon is not a happy chap and with the lives that they lead you can see why.

Once upon a time they were the most powerful creatures on Oddworld, but through time their grasp slipped, and although nobody really knows why, the balance of power has changed. They are now the doormats that all the other races on Oddworld wipe their feet on. They do have one redeeming feature though; they're good at farting. But that can't save them from being slaves for all eternity. Can it?..

ABOVE: Farting is fun, and can also be extremely dangerous. Later on in the game, you get the ability to produce exploding farts which can help out in more ways than one. Here, I've used my flatulent powers to clear a path through the mines.



Don't get me wrong though, there are some new elements to *Abe's Exoddus* that do improve over the original, it's just that the format basically stays the same. Abe's Mudokon allies are now more emotionally involved in the game than before. Mudokons now react differently to Abe, depending on what type of mood they are in, and also whether Abe has upset them or not. For instance, a depressed Mudokon may need a slap to bring him out of it, or an angry Mudokon will want an apology before he'll do as you request. Abe's actions throughout the game will effect the Mudokons, meaning that you always have to talk to them in the right way to get them to do your bidding. The 'Gamespeak' from the first game has been overhauled to include new phrases to deal with these situations. There's now even 'Gamespeak' for all of the characters that can be possessed by chanting in the game, allowing you to actually talk as other races. This becomes confusing at first, but once you learn all of the different languages and phrases, you find that ordering Scrabs and Sligs around becomes a great deal of fun.

Mudokon madness

The new storyline for *Exoddus* offers up a wealth of new environments for you to explore, all of which have the feeling and depth that was so evident in the original. The first-rate visuals move smoothly between the superb cut sequences and pre-rendered animations to give the game a real feeling of continuity. When you walk through a door for instance, the camera may pan through to the background to watch you coming out of the other side. If this isn't possible because the door is too far away, the screen becomes warped and distorted as it takes you to the new area.

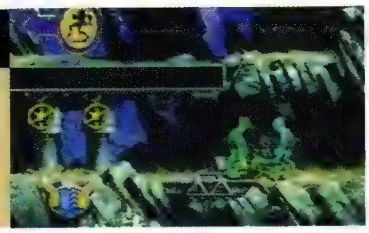
The backgrounds and foregrounds are mostly interactive as well. For instance, if you see a pathway in the background, you're usually able to reach it. This gives

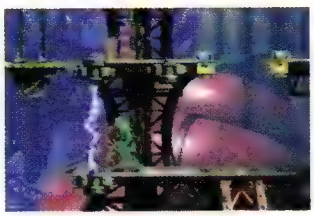
Nitrous Oxide

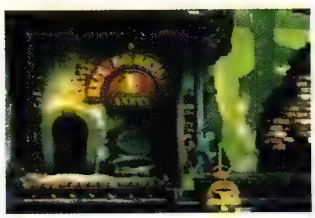
For some reason, the mines are full of Nitrous Oxide pipes which are prone to leaking. Now you may or may not know, but Nitrous Oxide is laughing gas. The trouble starts when your Mudokon friends are exposed to this laughing gas, as no matter how much you try, you just won't get them to behave. That is, of course, until you use physical violence, and a good slap usually does the trick. Make sure you watch out for high-as-a-kite Mudokons, because when they're acting like hyperactive loons they will often give the game away, alerting the guards and causing almost certain doom for Abe.

Suicidal Tendencies

The Mudokons are a miserable lot, so much so that some of them actually commit suicide. A neat little trick is to find a group of about six Mudokons and start to slap them mercilessly. As they retaliate they hit each other and the whole thing starts to turn into a glorious and visually hilarious slapfest. Hilarious that is until after some time, one of them will fall to the floor and die. On seeing this, the other Mudokons will start slapping their own foreheads until they die themselves. It's of absolutely no use to completing the game, but it's fun to watch.







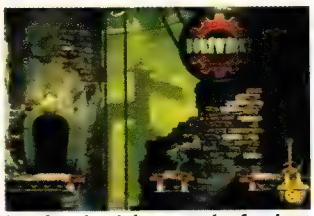
the game a multi-layered feel, providing a depth which swallows you up as you play.

This visual depth is backed up by some of the best platform/puzzle gameplay I've encountered. If you've played *Oddysee*, then you know what I'm talking about. The puzzles make up the bulk of the gameplay, and unlike most platform games, the onus isn't on slaughtering as many enemies as possible. In fact, when you come across an enemy, you never have a direct way of taking them out. You either have to possess them by reciting a chant, run away, or find a piece of scenery that may dispatch them. This gets you thinking far more than simply selecting your biggest weapon or jumping on their heads. There are literally hundreds of ways for dealing with your foe and not necessarily killing them, which means that you're constantly facing new challenges. There are plenty of new enemies for you to deal with as well. From flying Sligs to the despicable Fleeches which attack you with four foot tongues as you attempt to make a hasty exit before they gobble you up.

Mass Exoddus

Most sequels demand that a fundamental change is made from the original, but *Abe's Exoddus* really doesn't go with this theory. It simply offers a more encompassing experience than its predecessor without trying to beef it up with gimmicks. It's also one of the most challenging games I've come across for a while. Buy Abe's Exoddus and I promise that you won't put it down until it's finished, months later. Unless, of course, you're the type who stays locked up in your room at the expense of your social life to complete a game.

It was inevitable really that Abe's Exoddus was going to be something special. The original game was one of the highlights of '97, and although it doesn't attempt to revolutionise the format, I still think that Exoddus is a better game. There's more variety of baddies, more levels and more moves for Abe. The visuals are polished, refined and the sound stands out from the crowd. It's even got one of the most disgusting, yet likeable game characters in any PlayStation game. Oddworld and GT have done it again, and although Abe's Exoddus holds very few surprises, there's no doubt that they have yet another massive hit on their hands. It's worth buying just for the gratuitous guffs and burps...



ABOVE: The old 'wait for the box to fall then jump' setpiece can be forgiven when you look at the rest of the game.

The Competition

Flashback -
The king of platform puzzlers. When is it coming to the PlayStation though?

Abe's Oddysee -

Every bit as playable and enjoyable as *Exoddus*. You should have played it by now though, and if not, check it out on our coverdisc.

Heart of Darkness -

Fantastic visuals backed up by quality gameplay. It's just too damn short though.

Rated by Saul Trewern

STATION		OUT OF 100
Very similar to the original; still in-depth, playable and utterly engrossing.	+ Engrossing gameplay and story-line. + Very impressive visually, for a 2D game. - Hardly any different from the first *Abe's* outing. - Can become frustrating.	92

THE FIFTH ELEMENT

Remember how your jaw dropped when you first saw the lovely Milla Jovanovic in The Fifth Element? Well, don't expect the same reaction when you see the movie's videogame cousin.

The Fifth Element

Publisher: Sony

Developer: Kalisto

Release Date: Out now

Game Type: 3D Action Adventure

No of Players: One

Price: £34.99

Compatibility

Ball-breaking, big budget epics are what you'd normally associate with Bruce Willis, and The Fifth Element movie was no exception. It goes without saying then that Kalisto's The Fifth Element game will be just as exciting and adrenaline-filled as the film then doesn't it? Well no, actually.

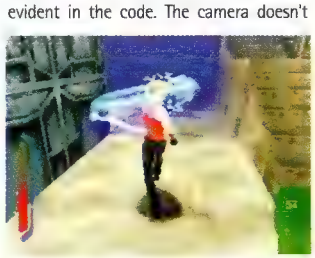
Rather than pushing back the technological barriers and attempting to emulate its big-screen counterpart, The Fifth Element actually uses the same game engine as last year's Kalisto game, *Nightmare Creatures*, which wasn't really all that advanced in the first place. Given the amount of time that The Fifth Element has been in development, I beg to ask why Kalisto haven't attempted to better what they must have known was at best an average engine?

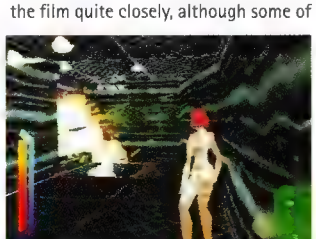
The bland element

Graphically, The Fifth Element isn't up to the standard of the games that it tries to ape. Even the original *Tomb Raider* would win hands down in a straight up graphical punch-up with this. The biggest visual problem is that the levels are all so bland. The PlayStation is more than capable of generating multiple objects, so it bothers me that most of the rooms and streets have hardly anything in or on them. Things would also benefit immensely from the environments being a little more solid, as there is a very definite clipping problem evident in the code. The camera doesn't help either, as it's constantly getting you into situations that should not happen. Like getting into a fight close to a wall and actually not being able to see yourself, or standing on a ledge, waiting for a car to go past but not being able to see the vehicle. These aren't simply aesthetic, they hinder the gameplay too. The lack of graphical prowess in the game does the movie a real injustice. Some may argue that the film itself wasn't actually very good, but at least it always managed to look and feel fantastic. Isn't the idea of a film licence to capture the atmosphere of the movie?

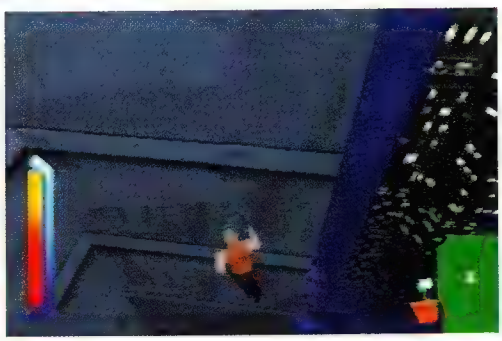
The boring element

The general plot does actually follow the film quite closely, although some of



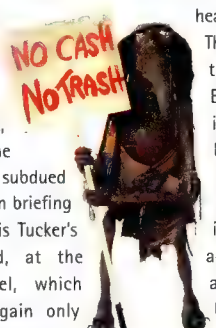


FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: Watch out for the hovercars when out on the street; the shield produces a blue orb around you when you're hit; how original, the explosions do actually look good in action even though they are looking a little pixellated here.



FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: It only takes Leeloo a few hits to dismantle this robot and the same amount to down a human. Hmmm: Korben falls to his death at an alarming rate, causing things to get frustrating for those with short fuses.

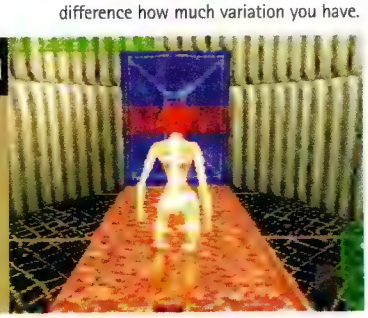
the storyline has had to be sacrificed. Between each level you're treated to some fine cut scenes from the movie but somehow, Kalisto have managed to tone them down, losing a lot of their impact. In fact, both the soundtrack and the cut scenes have a very subdued feeling about them. Mission briefing screens are hosted by Chris Tucker's character – Ruby Rhod, at the beginning of each level, which although useful, once again only serve to unnecessarily break up the in-game action.



Playing requires a basic mix of 'find the switch' puzzle solving, mixed with a healthy dose of combat action. The puzzle element is fine. It's the combat that makes The Fifth Element both frustrating and incredibly boring. Playing as Korben (Bruce's character) means that you get to carry a gun, whilst Leeloo can only indulge in a little hand-to-hand action. This is obviously an attempt to make things varied, but when both styles of fighting are badly recreated it makes no difference how much variation you have.

Fashion Victim

I'd wager that if you remember one thing about The Fifth Element film, it's the bandage dress Leeloo was sporting near the beginning. What? You don't remember it? Looks like we'll have to jog your memory.



The 'Could've Been' element

The Fifth Element does hold a few surprises though, which make you think that the game could have been so much better. Some of the levels are rather original, breaking up the usual running-through-corridors fare. For instance, you may have to hang from bars in the sky as you cross a street with hovercars flying past. Or run along a raised railway track with a train coming straight for you. It's a shame though that these highlights are so few and far between.

The Fifth Element is graphically inferior to its peers, and the few original areas of the gameplay only serve to show up how tiresome the rest of the game is. As with the majority of movie licences then, a severe air of missed opportunity engulfs The Fifth Element. Don't go there.

First Ten Minutes

The combination of cool renders and extracts from the movie in the intro sequence gives you the feeling that you're in for something special. Alas, as soon as you start playing, it doesn't take long for that feeling of being scabbed by yet another film licence to set in.

The Competition

Tomb Raider –
Lara's adventures are far more in-depth, entertaining and eye-pleasing than anything The Fifth Element can offer.

Deathtrap Dungeon –
Like The Fifth Element, this game is simply a *Tomb Raider* clone but of a better pedigree.

Duke Nukem TTK –
Another third-person action adventure, and again, in no way as pleasing as *Tomb Raider* – but better than The Fifth Element.

Rated by Saul Trewern

STATION		OUT OF 100
Another great licence ends up in the pit of gaming doldrums. Surprise, surprise.	+ The film is cool. + Leeloo's dress, or lack of it. - Pretty poor on the visuals front. - Boring and repetitive gameplay.	55

STICK IT FOR FREE!
Ryan Hughes at Dance
Joy safe deks
Psybadek
PSYGNOSIS
PlayStation
VANS @ JD
Features tracks by
Bentley Rhythm Ace
and David Holmes

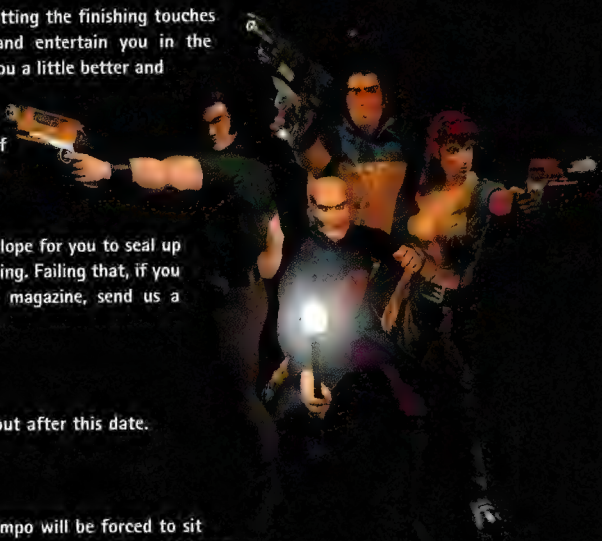
READERSHIP SURVEY

Give us a few minutes of your time and you could win:

A Sony 29" Dolby Pro-Logic TV - worth over £1000

plus a fantastic Sony DVD player - worth over £550

By the time you read this issue of STATION we will already be putting the finishing touches to Issue 3 and thinking about how we can further inform and entertain you in the forthcoming months. To this end, it is time that we got to know you a little better and discover just what lights your candle. Now, as we can't take you all down the pub and loosen your tongues with lager and pork scratchings, the next best thing we can do is bribe you with tons of freebies to fill out this short survey and send it back to us. So go on, tell us what you think!



Once you've finished, these four pages fold into a convenient envelope for you to seal up and send to us. Or you can put it in an envelope of your own choosing. Failing that, if you don't want to tear these pages out of your issue of STATION magazine, send us a photocopy instead.

All forms should be received by 26th November 1998.

Prize winners will be selected at random and prizes will be sent out after this date.

The Editor's decision is final.

Any Rapide Publishing or Psygnosis staff caught entering this compo will be forced to sit in a cab with James Gale for four hours while he educates you on the benefits of Chinese cinema. Trust us, you do not want to do this!

ALL YOU HAVE TO DO IS FILL IN THE FORM OVERLEAF ➤ ➤ ➤

For 200 runners-up we have the following PlayStation games to give away:

SPONSORED BY

50 COPIES OF
O.D.T

50 COPIES OF
COLONY WARS: VENGEANCE

50 COPIES OF
PSYBADEK

50 COPIES OF
GLOBAL DOMINATION

PSYGNOSIS

Reader Survey

ABOUT YOU

1) Name _____

2) Your Age (tick Box)

- ☐ Under 15
- ☐ 15-17
- ☐ 18-24
- ☐ 25-34
- ☐ 35-44
- ☐ 45-54
- ☐ 55-64
- ☐ 65+

3) ☐ Male ☐ Female

4) ☐ Married ☐ Single

5) Address _____

6) Are you:

- ☐ Employed full-time
- ☐ Employed part-time
- ☐ Self Employed
- ☐ Unemployed
- ☐ Student
- ☐ Still at School
- ☐ Retired

6a) If employed, what is your job type?

7) What is your income?

- ☐ Under £5000
- ☐ £5001-£10 000
- ☐ £10 001- £15 000
- ☐ £15 001-£25 000
- ☐ £25 001- £35 000
- ☐ Over £35 000

LEISURE HABITS

The following questions are designed to help us find out about your consumer habits and leisure time.

8) As a consumer, which product would you be more likely to spend money on in a month?

In order of preference:

1=most likely
5=least likely

- ☐ Videos
- ☐ Clothes
- ☐ Music
- ☐ Games Software
- ☐ Alcohol

9) How many times have you visited the cinema in the last month?

- ☐ None
- ☐ 1-2 times
- ☐ 3-4 times
- ☐ 4-5 times
- ☐ Over 5 times

10) Do you buy music CDs?

- ☐ Once a week
- ☐ Every other week
- ☐ Once a month
- ☐ Every other month
- ☐ Every 6 months
- ☐ Hardly Ever

11) How many music CDs do you buy a year?

- ☐ 1-5
- ☐ 6-10
- ☐ 11-15
- ☐ 16-20
- ☐ 20+

12) Are you connected to the internet?

☐ Yes ☐ No

12a) How long are on line for a week?

- ☐ 1-5 hours
- ☐ 6-10 hours
- ☐ 11-15 hours
- ☐ 16-20 hours
- ☐ 20+ hours

13) How often do you shop for clothes?

- ☐ Weekly
- ☐ Every other week
- ☐ Monthly
- ☐ Every other month
- ☐ Four times a year

14) How much do you spend on clothes a year?

- ☐ Under £500
- ☐ £501- £750
- ☐ £751-£1000
- ☐ £1000+

YOU AND YOUR PLAYSTATION

15) How many PlayStation games have you bought in the last 3 months.

- ☐ None
- ☐ 1-3
- ☐ 4-6
- ☐ 7-9
- ☐ 10+

16) What determines whether you buy a PlayStation game?

In order of influence:

1=most influential
6=least influential

- ☐ Magazine Reviews
- ☐ Advertising/Marketing
- ☐ Software Company
- ☐ Recomendation by word of mouth

- [ ] Genre
- [ ] Playable Demos

17) Which genre of games do you prefer to buy?

In order of preference:

1=most favourite
9=least favourite

- [ ] Beat-'em-ups
- [ ] Shoot-'em-ups
- [ ] Platform
- [ ] Driving
- [ ] Sports
- [ ] Sim Games
- [ ] First-Person 3D Shooters
- [ ] Strategy
- [ ] RPGs

THE MAGAZINE

18) What made you purchase STATION?

In order of influence:

1=most influential
6=least influential

- [ ] The Demo Disc
- [ ] The Front Cover
- [ ] An Advertisement
- [ ] Cover price of £4.95
- [ ] Editorial Style
- [ ] Number of pages

19) Where did you purchase your copy of STATION?

- [ ] WH Smith
- [ ] John Menzies
- [ ] Videogames Store
- [ ] Local Newsagent
- [ ] Railway Station
- [ ] Petrol Station

20) How often will you buy this magazine?

- [ ] Monthly (Subscription)
- [ ] Monthly (bought from shop)
- [ ] Every other Month
- [ ] Once in a while
- [ ] First time purchased

21) Will you buy the next issue?

- [ ] Yes
- [ ] No

If not, why not?

22) How easy is it to find STATION on the shelves?

- [ ] I can always get hold of a copy no trouble
- [ ] I have to hunt around a bit
- [ ] I hardly ever see it for sale anywhere
- [ ] This was the first time I have seen it

23) How many people will read your copy of this magazine?

- [ ] 1
- [ ] 2
- [ ] 3
- [ ] 4
- [ ] More than 5

24) Please mark the following features out of 5 .

1=poor
5=excellent

- [ ] Cover Exclusives
- [ ] Demo Disc
- [ ] Industry Soapbox
- [ ] Unfinished Business
- [ ] Played and Rated
- [ ] Features
- [ ] The eDGE
- [ ] Monitor

25) Which part of the magazine is the most appealing to you? In order of preference:

1=most appealing
6=least appealing

- [ ] Editorial
- [ ] Design
- [ ] Price
- [ ] Size (number of pages)
- [ ] Demo Disc

26) Are there any changes you would like to see made to forthcoming issues of STATION?

_____

_____

_____

27) How much do you spend on magazines each month?

- [ ] £2-£5
- [ ] £6-£10
- [ ] £11-£20
- [ ] £21-£30
- [ ] More than £30

28) Which of the following rival PlayStation magazines do you read?

- [ ] Official PlayStation Magazine
- [ ] PlayStation Plus
- [ ] PlayStation Power
- [ ] Play
- [ ] Total PlayStation
- [ ] PlayStation Pro
- [ ] PlayStation Solutions
- [ ] PowerStation

Which is your favourite? _____

Why? _____

_____

_____

29) What Non PlayStation magazines do you read?

_____

_____

FIRST FOLD HERE

AFFIX STAMP HERE

STATION

READERS' SURVEY
RAPIDE PUBLISHING
1 ROMAN COURT
48 NEW NORTH ROAD
EXETER
EX4 4EP

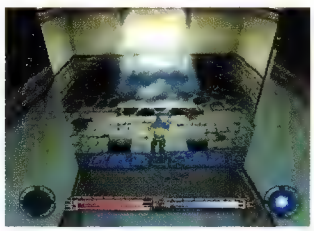
CUT ALONG THIS DOTTED LINE ON BOTH PAGES OF THIS SURVEY

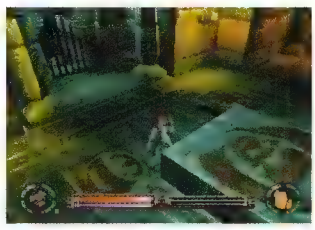
SECOND FOLD HERE – THEN SEAL WITH TAPE ALONG ALL EDGES

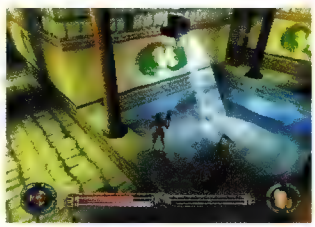
WILD
TM
9

O.D.T

When your airship lands in uncharted territory populated by gun-toting critters with a good eye and totin' heat, survival is imperative... you have to succeed, or die trying.







CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE: An oversized rock monster offers you quite a challenge. He's just one of the large-ass creatures you will encounter on your travels through ODT; there are various locations throughout, some of them similar to those you would find in other 3D adventures; pink Hair... who needs a torch!; a dark cave entrance always seems to feature in this type of game; ODT displays some excellent lighting effects that create an eerie atmosphere and keep you on your toes.

O.D.T

Publisher: Psygnosis

Developer: FDI

Release Date: November '98

Game Type: Action/Adventure

No of Players: One

Price: £39.99

Compatibility

With intense competition being the trademark of today's playstation adventure market, how apt is the title chosen by Psygnosis and developers FDI for their latest software? Very. ODT (Or Die Trying) is yet another to follow in the long line of PlayStation adventures, and once again goes into direct head-to-head combat with our very own Ms Croft. Featuring the usual wide-area 3D playing environment, vast amounts of puzzles, and hordes of enemy lifeforms to dispose of en-route, the question arises as to what this has to offer the gamer that we haven't already seen before...

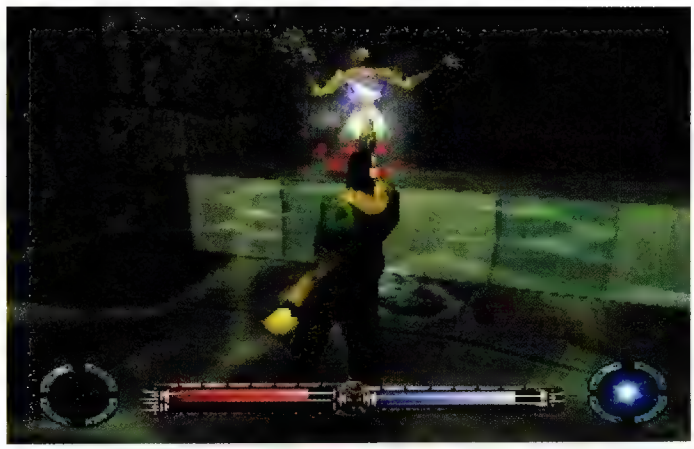
Owing largely to the success of the aforementioned *Tomb Raider* queen, the genre is becoming even more popular than ever. The imminent release of the highly regarded *Metal Gear Solid*, and the third rendition of the Eidos classic will automatically plunge any title of this style into the comparative shadows cast from the spotlight. Quality is vastly becoming a pre-requisite for PlayStation titles and with this, gamesplayers are aware of the degree of accomplishment which software now has to adhere to.

Stealthy Entrance

There were many exciting unveilings at the recent ECTS show in London, big names with envied floor-space stole the lions share of the press' attention, but underneath the shimmering sweat of the hordes of plastic display girls, a

We all live in a...

The troop set off in their majestic flying vessel only to encounter immediate difficulty. After checking for calm, the ship is then enveloped in a green electrical charge that renders the ship and the crew powerless. Following a crash landing, our beloved captain is assaulted by an ugly beast. What an original plot!



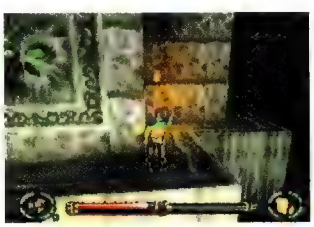
FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: In true, 3D adventure game tradition, the ability to hang to the edge of ledges can prove invaluable. Or pointless!; there is always something in a game that you enjoy doing the most. A sneaky approach and a well aimed spluttering of bullets to the chest just happens to be that something, in ODT.

relatively unknown contender had slipped in through the back door. It would be unfair to heavily criticise a game that has so many plus points going for it, but the truth is that graphically it does not endear you to it at all. Such is the standard of recent PSX titles, software can only be judged by what has preceded it. With the graphical progression we have witnessed in games such as *Gran Turismo* and *Resident Evil 2*, there surely is no excuse for giving us substandard visuals. Jagged, badly defined characters and (regarding the first level) a poor attempt at creating an atmospheric playing environment offers your eyeballs little pleasure. Having said this though, the playable content is far in advance of many games currently adorning the machine.

All Four One

After a malfunction with your flying vessel, ODT places you on a world inhabited with a crop of ugly creatures. The resultant effect sees you searching a planet for fuel and weapons to enable a hasty return to your journey. Unlike other games in this market, there are four different characters for you to play with. Julie, Ike, Maxx and Solaar each have their own strengths, weaknesses and skilled moves. Magic and armour capabilities are also features, as is the way they move around the playing area. With no restrictions on how you complete certain tasks, ODT offers you a real gaming experience. Each player begins with every weapon and a pair of deadly fighting fists. Ammunition is collected throughout your adventure as is the ability to adopt strategic fighting knowledge. A stealthy approach can be taken with a variety of different moves at hand. Crawling, crouching and shuffling around with your back firmly pressed against the comfort of a solid wall are at times vital to your cause. Add these to the inclusion of a 'dodge' button on the pad for the performance of emergency diving manoeuvres, and the emulation of all those great movie action heroes becomes a real possibility.

The Psygnosis team have produced an excellent piece of software that is definitely worthy of anybody's cash. The gaming experience may not be as intense as *Metal Gear* or as refined as the Tomb Raider series, but it is nonetheless an intriguing substitute.



ABOVE: Setting fire to trees may not please every green crusader, but it can help you progress through ODT.

First Ten Minutes

This is one intricate mother to come to terms with! Banana-skin controls make it far too easy to fall off edges, and the graphics are none too special either. Admirable opening FMV's and four playable characters will inspire you to continue playing, as will your first encounter with a gun-toting beast. But, as your skill with the controls increases, so will your enjoyment and excitement.

The Competition

Tomb Raider -

Synonymous with the PlayStation and videogame jargon in general. The standard by which all should be judged. And if you're unfamiliar with it? You'll have to get out more.

Metal Gear Solid -

Heaps of praise have been bestowed upon this gem from Konami. It offers a real stealth experience, quality graphics and characters that actually breath.

Tenchu -

Excellent 3D beat-'em-up that oozes quality in every area. The Activision game strikes the right balance between all-out fighting and strategical confrontation styles.

Rated by Lee Barrass

STATION

A great attempt in a genre which is over-populated with top quality titles.

\+ A dodge button on the pad. Fantastic idea.
\+ Four different characters to play with.
\- There are better titles of a similar style.
\- The graphics are not the most soothing to the eye.

OUT OF 100

80

UNHOLY WAR

Unholy War attempts to provide a perfectly balanced blend of action and strategy. Can Crystal Dynamics pull off this behemoth of a task? Station investigates...

FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: If a battle ends and there is another character in the vicinity, you can choose to go straight into a fight with that character without going to the mapscreen; the different landscapes within a map will offer a different arena when a battle takes place.

Unholy War

Publisher: Eidos

Developer: Crystal Dynamics

Release Date: 29th October

Game Type: Action/Strategy

No of Players: 1-2

Price: £39.99

First Ten Minutes

If you go straight into the Mayhem section you will be treated to fast-paced, exciting, but slightly soulless one-on-one combat action. Not very fulfiling, but you haven't tried the real strategy part of the game yet.

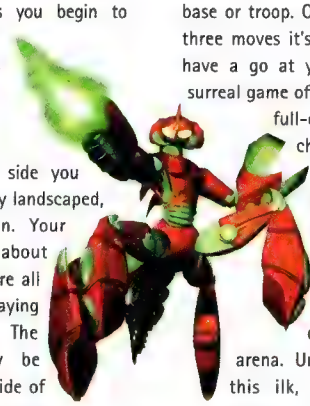
Compatibility

Wizards, warriors, jet-bikes

and mechanoids are just some of the characters that you will encounter whilst playing Crystal Dynamics' action-strategy fest, Unholy War. Unlike *Command & Conquer*'s blend of action and strategy, Unholy War offers a far more hands-on action game, with a little less, but still involving strategy element.

In the ultimate battle between good and evil, The Unholy War, you can play either the CPU or a mate as one of two sides. The Arcane army is made up of sages, magicians and all types of mythical creatures, whereas Tecknos are a force of technological beings who rely on machinery to help their war effort.

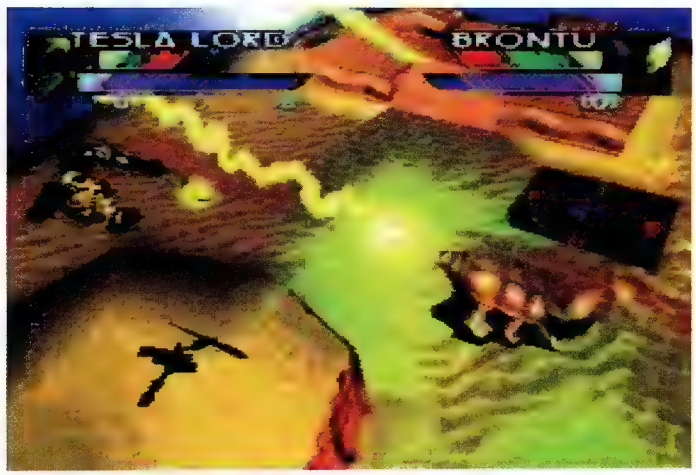
The two modes of play on offer allow you to either dive straight into the one-on-one combat or take part in one of twelve wars. The combat sections, although fun for a while, feel a little disjointed and out of context. Once you start a war though, all becomes clear as you begin to experience the combat in the setting it was designed for.



Good Hex

After choosing your side you find yourself on a fully landscaped, hex-based mapscreen. Your characters (usually about five or six of them) are all dotted around the playing area ready to go. The enemy will usually be placed on the other side of the map, although sometimes you may start off close together. The map section is turned-based, and you can either move a character, create a new one using 'AUR' mined from the ground, or choose to attack an enemy base or troop. Once you've used your three moves it's the enemies turn to have a go at you. It's much like a surreal game of chess but with added full-on combat. Once you choose to attack or are attacked yourself, the two clashing characters will face off in a cool animation and be transported to a completely 3D battle arena. Unlike most games of this ilk, be it role-play or strategy, Unholy War actually allows you to control your character arcade-style in a fight to the death. These fight sections make up the bulk

FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: Take to the air if you have a strong floor-based character to fight against; here you can see plenty of different spells in action on the mapscreen; this animated screen appears as two characters face off before a battle.

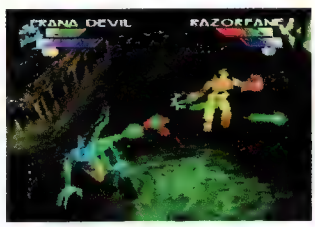


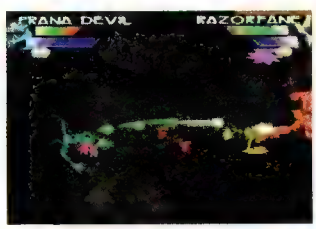
of the gameplay and can be very involving, especially if the two fighters are of equal strength, or if their is an odd or interesting match-up between characters.

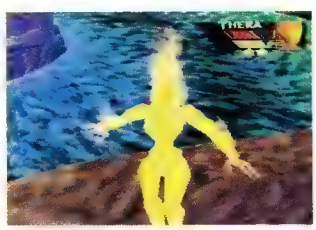
Unholy Influences

Unholy War takes its influences from many types of game, and as well as strategy and action, it also leans a little towards RPGs. Don't be frightened off though, you won't have to sit through hours of boring dialogue with the village chief's cat and you won't have to find any sacred crystals etc. The RPG element is only really noticeable in the hit points and magic spells that can be created on the mapscreen. Each character has a type of magic or special weapon that can be utilised, which can be anything from a cure spell to a firestorm. These spells, if used carefully, can serve to give you the upper hand before you go into battle. And believe me, you're going to need it! Playing the CPU even on the normal level is a very frustrating experience, but one that is ultimately fulfiling when you overcome it. The CPU is just as tough on the map screens as in combat so you'll need to think hard as well as fight hard.

There are few development houses that are wholly synonymous with quality product, and although there has been no shouting about Unholy War, Crystal Dynamics must know that they have a back door hit on their hands. We weren't expecting more than an average RPG, and what we got was a fantastic-looking and extremely playable blend of three game genres that has proved to have more staying power than Dirk Diggler on Viagra. All of this goes to make one of the biggest surprises of the year, and I'm more than happy to let the cat out of the bag. S







War Machines

Each side has a host of different characters. All have different abilities and weapons. Some may be strong and slow, others my have the ability to fly or morph into a different shape. Some have vehicles, others ride animals. The variety in the characters adds an extra dimension to the gameplay, as you have to find the best match-ups to give you the upper hand. For instance, if the opposition has a couple of large, heavy robots, you could choose to attack one with a sprightly and nimble flying character so that you can dive bomb them as they sit on the ground helpless. There are hundreds of different strategies to use depending on which characters you use, which should take most of us an absolute age to figure out and put into action.

The Competition

Tribal -
The action bits on Sony's forthcoming *Tribal* are very similar to the action from Unholy War.

Masters of Monsters -
Same hex-based move and attack your enemy, only without the action and nowhere near as good.

Vandal Hearts -
Classic turn-based gameplay backed up by distinctive and classy visuals.

Rated by Saul Trewern

STATION

The SAS couldn't pull off a better surprise hit than Unholy War.

+ Perfect blend of action and strategy.
+ Even the hex-based strategy sections look good.
- Could become a little limited after extensive play.
- Frustrating at times.

OUT OF 100

88

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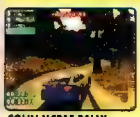
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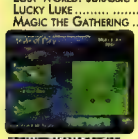
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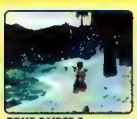
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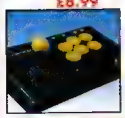

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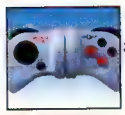

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QUALITY SERVICE

SPYRO THE DRAGON

Sony's continuing quest to bring a viable *Mario* substitute to the PlayStation continues, this time employing a wee dragon named Spyro. A genuinely nice little chap who you could happily introduce to your parents.

Spyro the Dragon

Publisher: Sony

Developer: Universal Int.

Release Date: October

Game Type: Platform

No of Players: One

Price: £34.99

First Ten Minutes

The visuals are stunning, but the gameplay is a bit limited. Let's hope this isn't going to be another *Croc*! The speech is really starting to rub my rhubarb and I've only been playing for ten minutes – that isn't a good sign at all. Has anyone got any ear plugs?

Compatibility

Cue violent fits of temper, but I really detest the word 'nice'! Unquestionably the most pathetic and meaningless word in the entire English language. An adjective used only in emergencies, when nothing else comes to mind. Take for example an occasion when one has met a celebrity and has been asked by another to describe the experience. The expected term will follow, "Oh they were so nice and ordinary." Or when an unsuspecting neighbour is approached by a news crew wanting personal details of the blood lusting serial killer that used to live next door, the same answer will apply, "Oh he seemed such a nice man."

Nice is crap, plain and simple, but as much as it pains me to use this sour-tasting expression, Sony's latest bid to launch yet another platform hero to the *Mario* and *Sonic* hall of fame fits the 'nice' bill perfectly. Spyro The Dragon is a rather nice game, it's not great, isn't bad, it's just, err, nice.

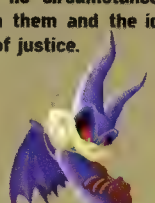
From the moment the piracy warning fades to black and the credits sequence starts, you know exactly what the game will deliver. The cute, almost childish design of the characters and backgrounds provide a clear indication of the game's intended audience - children. The close parallels both visually and with the gameplay to Nintendo's almost trademark style will cause a distinct divide in potential audience. Instantly establishing itself as a Nintendo want-to-be, the flaws begin to mount up. First off, and incredibly annoying, is the game's sense of humour, something reflected in the bafflingly huge amount of cut scenes the player will be subjected to. In a very similar manner to that of Psygnosis' *Discworld*, the comic value will either appeal or annoy. Those readers that find a smart-mouthed baby dragon talking like Charles Bronson, and a variety of other similarly clichéd characters, all of whom sound as if they are doing a very poor impression of the

Platform Criminals

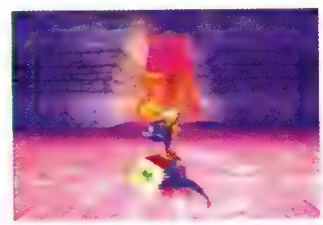
The following game characters have all been responsible for dire crimes against the platform genre and should under no circumstance be applauded or approached. Any similarity between them and the idiots that conceived them would prove the existence of justice.

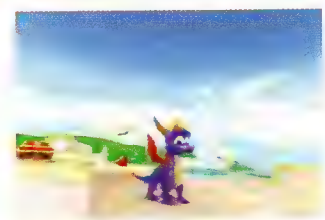
RASCAL
Psygnosis' horribly ill-conceived little kid character in his platform hero mode. Oh per-leeze!

BUBSY
Dire, dire tiger creature. time in his company can be likened to inserting a hot poker in your anus.



JERSEY DEVIL
Shite, plain and simple. He's purple and looks a little like Batman, yeah, great idea...





BOTTOM LEFT TO RIGHT: The graphics are incredibly solid, unlike previous 3D platformers; unable to fly, the player will be able to glide Spyro during the above sequence; update is also very impressive with literally no pop-up, and only small use of misting; the release of imprisoned dragons provides the basis for much of the gameplay.

late Jon Pertwee, will be suitably amused - and those that don't, won't.

This Is Not Humour!

A little worrying is the pace of the game. The majority of play is almost meandering, with excitement coming in short, albeit very enjoyable, bursts. The size of an average level is impressively large, yet the design and sparse smattering of enemies limit exploration possibilities and intensity accordingly. Varying only marginally between worlds, Spyro's objectives are not surprising. The collection of treasure and the release of captive friends are mixed with further genre clichés, to create an overly familiar product. The level design again inspires that feeling of deja-vu, featuring a *Croc*-like blend of large free-roaming areas and platform sections. Those wanting more than the average platform fodder will naturally be very disappointed.

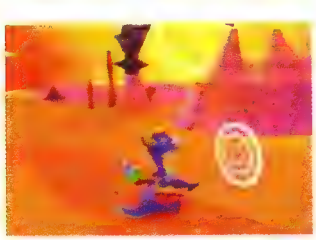
Another indication of the target audience is the difficulty level; there is little here to provide any lasting challenge to the experienced player. With the path to success clearly marked at all times, this is not a flaw of the game itself but of the entire genre.

The control of the character and the camera are also very distracting, particularly when one considers that this is a platform game. When perched upon a tiny platform, with instant death surrounding you, only a gentle tap on the controller will send you over the edge. Or maybe the camera will suddenly adopt a new viewpoint without warning and obscure your view completely, which will definitely result in much swearing and shaking of fists.

Oh For God's Sake

Yet amongst these small annoyances, Spyro is, bizarrely enough, never less than extremely enjoyable. With the almost retro appeal of the gameplay complimented by one of the most glorious 3D engines to grace a PlayStation title, this beautiful aesthetic appeal is just enough to blinker the player to the almost complete lack of originality and minor gameplay flaws. The sickly sweet charm of the central characters and increasingly annoying speech is hard to overcome, becoming vomit-inducing whilst also remaining endearing in a childlike way. Having spent several hours in the company of the little purple fella, I was overcome by the urge to don an orange knitted sweater and happily skip around the office, offering boiled sweets to both young and old.

Spyro is an undeniably enjoyable romp, but one that disappoints somewhat due to the huge potential of its stunning game engine. A fantastic showcase for the PlayStation, pleasing to the eye yet lacking an original gameplay punch. This is platform perfection in its purest form, taking all the key elements of the genre classics to create this title, but the injection of something a little different, or just a break from the expected, would have made this a classic. Spyro remains a rather nice and fluffy romp, if a tad uninspiring, that will warm the cockles of the platform addict's heart. The perfect partner for a quite cold winter's evening, maybe being nice isn't such a bad thing after all. 9



The Competition

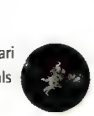
Gex: Enter the Gecko -

BMG's wonderfully 3D re-invention of the retro 3D platformer. Classic gameplay combined with stunning visuals.

Croc -

Fox Interactive's twist on *Mario 64*, again manages to emulate the visuals yet stumbles with the tired gameplay.

Pitfall 3D -



Activision's update of the classic Atari platform adventure. The ropey visuals hide a game of much substance.

Rated by James Gale

STATION	+ Glorious graphics and animations + Huge levels, and lots of 'em	OUT OF 100
Very nice, and for once that's a good thing.	- The humour and design are stomach-turningly sweet - Lack of originality	82

BUST-A-GROOVE

"You can tell by the way I use my walk I'm a disco fiend, no time to talk..." Enix's Bust-A-Groove has been rescued from limbo by Sony, and released to the nation's more hip cats. Will we be able to resist the charms of this virtual dancefloor?

Bust-A-Groove

Publisher: Sony

Developer: Enix

Release Date: November

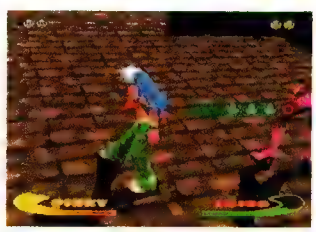
Game Type: Dance-athon Baby!

No of Players: 1-2

Price: £34.99

Compatibility

Attention all disco divas and battle DJs! The development of software is constantly placing more and more emphasis upon aesthetics and sonics, to such a degree these days that often not enough attention is paid to the gameplay itself. Yet when the correct balance has been achieved, the fruit of this union can be the sweetest on the videogame tree. It is this fusion of visuals and sounds that serves Sony's Bust-A-Groove so well, albeit only briefly, inviting players to become instantly embroiled in what is (sadly) disappointingly basic gameplay. Reviving the 'Simon Says' mimicking style of *PaRappa*, the player finds themselves stood upon a dancefloor, preparing to engage in a dancing battle with their opponent, which can be either operated by another player, or it can simply be a CPU drone. As the music commences, the player will be greeted with a series of increasingly difficult button combinations. Here's the clever bit – unlike the rapping dog, timing is the key to success. Each of the twelve musical tracks are based upon a basic four-beat structure, with the player having to enter the last part of the combination during the fourth beat. The more combinations achieved, the more complex the dance routine becomes, but if you mess it up, the sequence will return to the beginning mid-flow – and all-important scores will be lost. Adding a further and much-needed element to the gameplay is the inclusion of special attack and defensive moves. They enable players to throw a proverbial spanner in their opponent's handbag-circling works.



CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE: The dance routines range from the marginally impressive to bloody stupid; Strike is our favourite character as he is packing double heat, Woo style; the constantly moving camera is a pain in the arse.

PLAY THAT FUNKY MUSIC

Each character's visual style is representative of their choice of music.

STRIKE
Techno Rave Stomper

SHORTY
Poptastic Midgit Freak

PINKY
Slinky Soul Diva

KITTY N
Bizarre Jap Pop Queen

GAS-O
Hardcore Rubber Lover

HEAT
Raver, Completely Off On One

HAMM
Psuedo Hip Hop With Fries

COLUMBO
Barking Euro Cheese

It's Booty Time

The winners of these bouts of hip swinging and groin thrusting are those who have spent most of their time in the centre of the camera's lens. Logically, those performing the most spectacular routines will attract the most attention, so those wanting glory are advised to remain slaves to the rhythm at all times.

Sadly, this relatively simple task of counting the beats and tapping the button on the fourth one is rendered much tougher in practice due to the very distracting and abysmally awful tunes that spoil the game. Attempting to reproduce a number of differing dance styles and sounds, the gameplay suffers. With twelve tracks, of which only three did not make this scribe want to vomit, what's on offer here is a bland blend of hiphop and disco. The music is distinctly Japanese in origin, and even the most uninformed listener will testify to the Japanese's quirky musical taste. Clichéd beats and samples are matched with annoying vocals, combining to produce a score that is instantly deliciously camp and amusing, but which becomes less and less appealing with every listen. In all honesty, that just about sums up the title. Bust-A-Groove runs out of steam worryingly quickly.

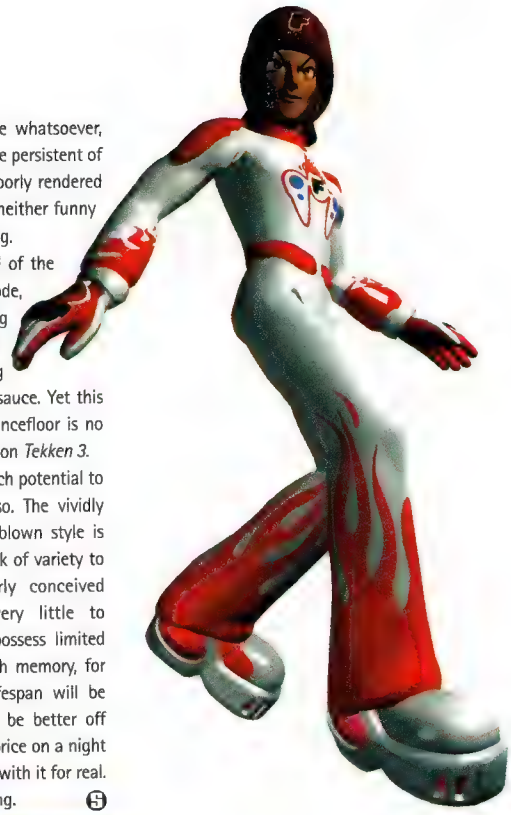
Although Bust-A-Groove introduces a wide array of dancing styles, the player is limited to only a small amount of combinations and dance steps. This is another flaw that becomes more apparent with time, as you witness the same moves over and again.

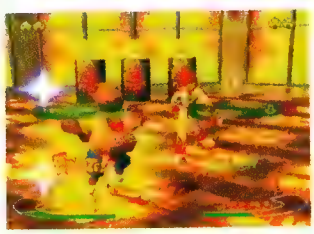
It's Bad, It's Bad

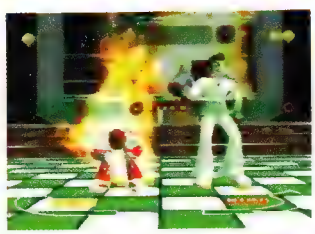
The reason why this title fails where *PaRappa* succeeded is that the game lacks heart. The characters are stereotypes of the worst kind, and even in their 3D polygon form they are far more two-dimensional than the paper-thin cast of *PaRappa* ever was. The ten characters that the player must face have only a single track each and just the one dancing style, meaning variety is definitely not the game's strongest suit. This results in the one-player game being devoid of any replay value whatsoever, and all that awaits the more persistent of gamesplayers is a set of poorly rendered end sequences, which are neither funny nor even partially rewarding.

A dull light at the end of the tunnel is the two-player mode, something woefully missing in *PaRappa*, an ideal option for those gamers returning from a hard night on the sauce. Yet this refreshing battle of the dancefloor is no substitute for a good blast on *Tekken 3*.

Bust-A-Groove has much potential to impress, but fails to do so. The vividly colourful visuals and overblown style is hard to ignore, but the lack of variety to the gameplay and poorly conceived musical scores leave very little to recommend. Unless you possess limited musical taste or a goldfish memory, for which the ten minute lifespan will be more than enough, you'll be better off with spending the asking price on a night on the town, getting jiggy with it for real. It'll be far more entertaining.







CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: The game's music creators have rendered the cool 70's disco grooves completely unlistenable; minor lighting effects indicate successful combos; special attacks are rather handy if things are looking a little bleak.

First Ten Minutes

What a fantastic idea. Being a bit of diva and a little partial to tearing up the dancefloor myself, what could be more fun than grabbing a joypad and punching in some superfly disco grooves? With a compelling two-player mode and a wealth of different musical styles, it makes you want to don an afro wig and get funky with your bad self.

The Competition

PaRappa The Rapper -

Sony's ground-breaking blend of hip-hop and canines. Literally dripping with charm, one would be hard pressed not to instantly fall in love with this surreal romp.

Spice World -

The then Fab Five, unleashed in their first and (most likely) last PlayStation release. This contrived pseudo-multimedia experience is cursed by a game engine that lacks any merit.

CAPOIERA
Hard House, Robot Funkin'

FRIDA
House Mildly Edam

HIRO
Disco Fever, But Not The Good Kind

KELLY
Sickly Trash, Avoid At All Costs

ABOVE: Pinky attempting to show all just how she got her nickname.

Rated by James Gale

STATION

Like the 70's disco scene, it's lurid, overblown and a little embarrassing really...

+ Glorious visuals and character design.
+ Some jolly toe-tappers on the soundtrack.
- Lifespan of a sickly mayfly.
- Some annoying inclusions to the soundtrack

OUT OF 100

63

B-MOVIE

If a game's going to make it big in the hard-fought world of the shoot-'em-up, it's going to have to be something special. Have GT Interactive cracked it with B-Movie though? Station investigates...

B–Movie

Publisher: Grolier

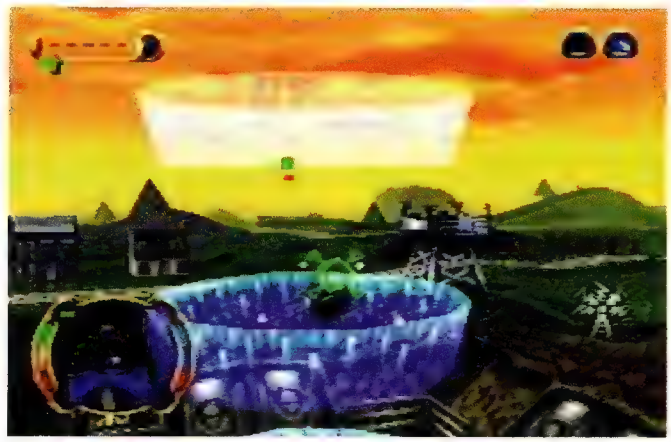
Developer: Frontier

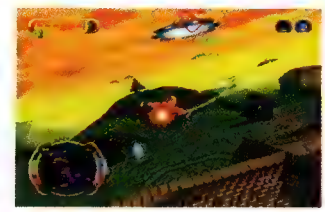
Release Date: Out now

Game Type: Retro update

No of Players: One

Price: £34.99





CLOCKWISE FROM MAIN: Park yourself in this beam of light at your base to either change ships or recharge the power of the one you're in; all of the different ships have massively varying abilities as well as different pilots; although you have no up and down controls, your ship will automatically track the terrain to avoid buildings and hills.

First Ten Minutes

A training mission greets you at the start of the game which is pretty dull, although it does reflect what's in store for you shortly. Once completed though, the in-game action hots up tenfold as the aliens start to attack and all hell is let loose.

The Competition

V2000 –
Almost identical in game concept, although it's really far less arcade orientated than B-Movie.

Soviet/Nuclear Strike –
The classic search/rescue and destroy game which still holds its own, even today.

Compatibility

It Came From Outer Space

and hundreds of other cheese and rubber monster-filled classics are the inspiration for B-Movie, GT Interactive's latest blockbuster hope. Created by London-based developers King Of The Jungle, B-Movie is the ultimate ode to a forgotten time in cinema, where paper maché outfits mixed with washing up bottle space ships to create Saturday morning matinees that would scare the pants off the innocent souls in the cinema. Of course, B-Movies are seen as laughable nonsense these days, which luckily is something that B-Movie the game certainly isn't.

You control the obligatory pilot who's out to save the world from an all-out alien attack but, although the plot sounds like hundreds of others before it, the developers have managed to include a fair amount of original touches.

The sumptuous rap-around 3D worlds possess a wealth of tasks for you to take on in the many multi-task missions that you come across in your bid to save the world from alien scum. This could be anything from rescuing civilians, escorting another vehicle or moving anti-aircraft guns around. This mission style offers more than simple Martian mauling, and gives B-Movie a much longer life-span.

The blasting does play a very major role within the game though, and at times can become almost too frenetic due to the blistering pace that the game runs at. Thankfully then, there's a wealth of different ships and weapons to be obtained. To get hold of some new hardware, you must collect the alien technology that downed flying saucers leave after you've just blasted them to Kingdom Come. You will also need scientists who can be set to work on different projects. This part of the game adds a certain layer of depth that most action packed blasters seem to negate.

Before the start of each mission, you're presented with a choice of ships, from which you can pick three. Changing ships is done at your base on each level and can offer you an upper hand over the alien hordes, as your ships will repair and recharge themselves whilst out of use.

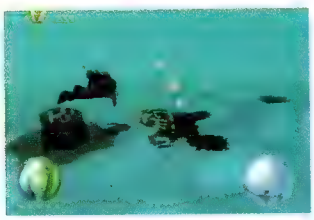
As you can see from the screenshots, B-Movie is one hell of a good looking game. The high-res graphics run at an amazing pace and at times the screen becomes literally filled with enemy ships, with no slowdown at all. There's enough difference in the game's environments to keep most of us interested for a long time, and the B-Movie soundtrack perfectly captures the atmosphere of these 1950's flicks, as does the whole game. Ultimately though, it's the fast and frantic gameplay that makes B-Movie an addictive, playable and original game.

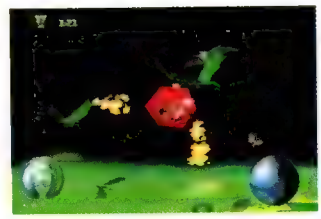
Rated by Saul Trewern

STATION		OUT OF 100
Graphically close to stunning, with frantic B-Movie action gameplay to boot.	+ Superb graphics, especially the explosions and trails. + Plenty of different ships and weapons to develop. - Some of the longer missions are a little tedious. - The aiming system is a little hit and miss.	85

V2000

Having created one of the most playable games of the past decade, David Braben's Frontier Developments attempt to bring *Virus* kicking and screaming into the nineties. But can V2000 offer the pure addictiveness of its famous forefather?





FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: The underwater section requires a different approach to controlling your ship; the Castle World has some of the most impressive and detailed views; the original-style *Virus* level makes an appearance for dedicated retro game fans.

V2000

Publisher: Grolier

Developer: Frontier

Release Date: Out now

Game Type: 3D Shooter

No of Players: One

Price: £34.99

Millennium computer chaos has nothing to do with V2000, the follow up game to David Braben's classic *Virus*. It sets you as the lone pilot of a hover-ship, with your simple goals being to stop the spread of a deadly virus, destroy a nation of alien creatures and keep the population of the world safe from harm.

The original game was one of the most difficult that I've ever played, and one of the goals of V2000 is to offer the same in-depth gameplay, but with an easier and more functional control method. Problem is, it hasn't really worked and V2000 is just as frustratingly difficult to get into, although not quite as grey hair inducing as the original. Your hovership has to be about the hardest craft to control in any videogame, and despite attempts to make it easier, V2000 still has an incredibly steep learning curve.

Nice Quilt

Improvements have been made on the visual front. *Virus* was limited by the power of the machines it ran on and graphically, although the patchwork quilt effect was functional, it was definitely on the wrong side of gaudy. Thankfully then, Braben and his team have done away with this (apart from a special retro level), and replaced it with some fully detailed and intricate 3D environments. There are six worlds in all and thirty different levels, all of which have a unique graphical style. Incredibly though, the game stays solid throughout. Impressive when you witness the speed at which your ship darts about the landscape.

The mission structure in V2000 usually consists of you collecting scientists to work on your base, then going off to save the inhabitants of the level you are on. Whilst you're out fighting, the scientists will be beavering away on new weapons. There are twenty-five in total, which make up an arsenal that should make any adversary soil their Calvin Kleins. Not this lot though, especially when they realise exactly how hard it is for you to aim at them properly, due to that arduous control system.

V2000 does have a few flaws that to an experienced gamesplayer will be both extremely obvious and frustrating. But when you break through them, which can admittedly take weeks, you are treated to a game that's every bit as addictive as *Virus* itself, only without those patchwork quilt visuals. If you like a challenge, you won't regret buying V2000. If you're a quitter with no drive, you'd better steer clear.

ABOVE: The aliens come in many shapes and forms as you'd expect, but most of them are of the familiar bug-eyed insect variety.

First Ten Minutes

If you've played the original *Virus* game you already know how tough the control method is. V2000 attempts to make things a little easier, although first-time players should still expect to find themselves careering around out of control.

The Competition

B-Movie -
Almost identical in game concept although far more arcade orientated than V2000.

Soviet/Nuclear Strike -
The classic search/rescue and destroy game which still holds its own, even today.

Compatibility

Rated by Saul Trewern

STATION

Stick with it, and a good game does shine through, eventually.

\+ In-depth mission structure.
\+ Loads of weapons.
\- Aiming is difficult.
\- Control method may alienate younger gamers.

OUT OF 100

70

ROGUE TRIP

Rogue Trip

Publisher: GT Interactive

Developer: Singletrac

Release Date: November '98

Price: £34.99

Singletrac, developers of the praised *Twisted Metal* and *Twisted Metal World Tour* have the ability to produce a superlative combat driving game. Why whatever happened with Rogue Trip is a mystery.

The Twisted Metal series proved to be a mild success, and the formula of frantic combat mixed with high-speed driving action has been recreated in many games since, most notably Activision's bell bottomed seventies cheese fest *Vigilante 8*. Singletrac hope to claim the number one spot back with Rogue Trip, but I'm afraid that there are a few reasons why this will never happen.

At the forefront of Rogue Trip's problems are the very poor visuals. We're looking at a game that's been created in the twilight years of the PlayStation's life, and a company with the track record of Singletrac should be able to come up with something better than these lifeless visuals. It's a shame because the ideas are here, they just haven't been implemented properly.

Rogue Trip does have a few saving graces though. The intro is one of the best we've seen in a while and some of the cars, characters and environments are interesting at first. On the whole though, Rogue Trip doesn't even live up to Singletrac's *Twisted Metal* games, which are over two years old now. This step back in time will never top *Vigilante 8*, so if you're after a car combat game, you know which one to go for.

Rated by Saul Trewern

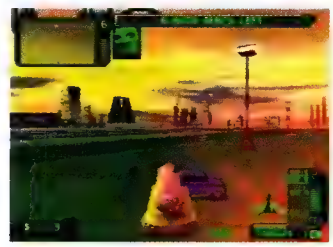
STATION

Rogue Trip is no more than an inferior clone of the funky Vigilante 8.

\+ Good selection of vehicles and battle arenas.
\+ Excellent rendered intro.
\- The camera movement makes some people feel sick.
\- Graphics look like first generation PlayStation games.

OUT OF 100

60



POCKET FIGHTERS

Pocket Fighters

Publisher: Virgin

Developer: Capcom

Release Date: November '98

Price: £34.99

Capcom must have been fleecing the older market for years with their continuous *Street Fighter* updates and sequels. Now though, the kids had better watch out, because Pocket Fighter has arrived.

I'm actually wrongly accusing Capcom here because Pocket Fighters isn't just a Street Fighter game, it actually contains characters from various other Capcom games. Still, I can't help but be cynical because I'm one of the few who feels that *Street Fighter* should retire, before it's sacked.

At least Capcom have tried a completely different angle with Pocket Fighters, and although it's not going to be a best-seller, the kiddie approach is a novel effort.

The first thing to do when aiming a game at kids is to squash the characters up, making them small and dumpy. Next step, add a palette full of bright colours to seal the deal. OK, so Capcom have added a few extras to Pocket Fighter, but we all know these are cursory to the way the game looks.

The fighting itself retains the usual Street Fighter style with all of the moves that we're all so familiar with. This is no bad thing for the kiddies though, because it's a basic but tried and tested formula with a proven track record.

Don't be tempted into buying this game because your hip mate tells you that it's cool. It isn't. It's aimed at kids, it'll be played by kids and only kids will enjoy it.

Rated by Saul Trewern

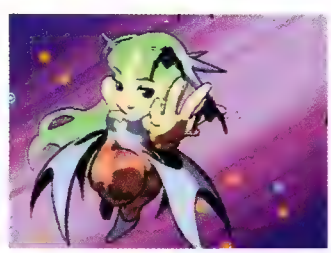
STATION

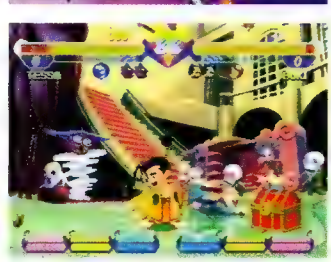
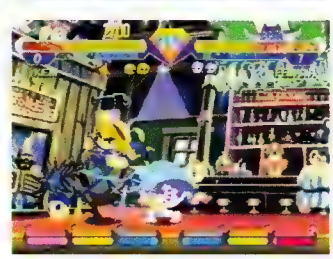
Why? We all know that kids love the adult orientated beat 'em-ups anyway?

\+ Lot's of things to do other than fight.
\+ Cute and colourful graphics.
\- It's aimed squarely at a younger audience.
\- Haven't we had enough of Street Fighter yet?

OUT OF 100

65



MOTO RACER 2

The full throttle dare-devil world of road biking and the acrobatic, big air world of motocross go head-to-head in the second installment of EA's Moto Racer.

Moto Racer 2

Publisher: Electronic Arts

Developer: Delphine

Release Date: November '98

Price: £34.99

It's a good idea, and if the execution was more thorough, the combination of two of the most exciting sports in the world on one game could have been a hit. Moto Racer 2 attempts to build on the foundations of last years EA released Moto Racer, but it still contains many of the flaws that marred the original game.

This basically comes down to one thing though; realism. On the face of it, Moto Racer 2 seems as though it can offer a realistic simulation of the two sports on offer, but once you start playing it only takes a few corners to realise that this isn't the case. The simulation mode tries to address this by making the bikes heavier and not so wild, although this only really works on the road bike section. Funnily enough, the motocross races are the most fun to play, probably because you have jumps and ruts to deal with and not just a smooth tarmac surface.

Moto Racer 2 is in no way a bad racing game, despite its difficulties. It has more tracks than the average racer, plenty of different bikes and more speed than the Freak Brothers have had in their whole lives.

Moto Racer 2 is marginally better than the original game but not as much as it could be. Perhaps EA will finally crack it for Moto Racer 3.

Rated by Saul Trewern

STATION

Better than the first Moto Racer offering, but the dubious handling is still there.

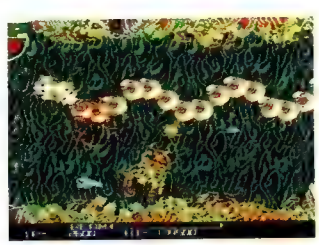
+ Two types of bike racing to try your hand at.
+ Over thirty tracks to race.
- The handling on both types of bike is a little suspect.
- Although fast, the dreaded jerkiness sets in at times.

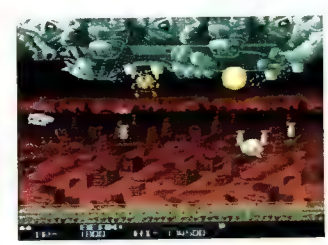
OUT OF 100

70

R-TYPES

Two of the best shoot-'em-ups ever on one disc – what more could you want? Well, the demo of the new R-Type game that appeared on the Jap disc would have been nice.





R-Types

Publisher: Virgin

Developer: Irem

Release Date: Out Now

Price: £29.99

It's pretty obvious that the only reason that R-Types exists is because it's a handy vehicle to build a buzz around the forthcoming new R-Type game. Still, as cynical as this may be, there's no denying that the chance to own two of the best shoot-'em-ups ever created on one disc is a little hard to ignore.

For thirty quid you get R-Type and R-Type 2. These games offer some of the most electrifying shoot-'em-up thrills and spills you'll find on the PlayStation, and even though they're both getting on a bit, they are actually very strong in the visuals department. Both games are taken directly from their arcade counterparts so you can re-live the complete R-Type experience without having to pump a cabinet full of ten pence pieces whilst a little gypsy boy bites your ankle asking for a fag.

You'll already know whether you want to buy R-Types or not though. There's no point in me telling you to rush out and grab a copy because you're either a fan or you're not. If you're the latter though, it's time you sorted your life out.

Rated by Saul Trewern

STATION

It may be retro, but it is about the best that classic gaming can offer.

+ Two of the best shoot-'em-ups ever on one disc.
+ Not a bad price for memories as sweet as this
- Doesn't contain the rolling demo of the new R-type
- We need to go forward, not back.

OUT OF 100

87

BRAVE FENC

Mario meets the RPG is a pretty good description of Squaresoft's new adventure, Brave Fencer Musashi. Could this be a mouth-watering cocktail to quench our thirst for adventure, or will Squaresoft's mixing of the drinks leave us with a headache and a queasy tum?

FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: Those gamers with a phobia concerning bugs are best advised to avoid the fourth area, as the multi-legged foes really come out of the wood work; the action heats up even on the first level. Draw your weapon and slash away, little man!

Brave Fencer Musashi

Publisher: Squaresoft

Developer: Square

Release Date: Out now (import)

Game Type: Action RPG

No of Players: One

Price: £50 approx

First Ten Minutes

More akin with a 3D platform adventure, jumping, running and shooting stuff. This ain't *Final Fantasy!* Oh well, its bloody good fun all the same. The graphics are also on the impressive side, and I think that this is going to be great.

Compatibility

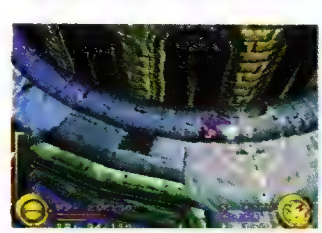
Pulling top oriental women

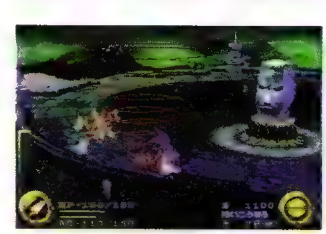
or being able to watch Takeshi "Beat" Kitano movies without having to bother with subtitles are both great reasons to learn the Japanese lingo, but none will be a more practical reason than to gain the ability to enjoy Japanese software. The wealth of titles released in the glow of the rising sun overwhelms that of the releases that fill both the European and the US markets. Thankfully, most of the games that warm the hearts of the Japanese gamesplayer are either totally obscure or come with barbed chest hooks that leave any Endurance-watching PlayStation owner cold and rather scared. Yet amongst the various dating sim, fishing games and generally bizarre cack lie a few nuggets of genius. One such gold plated title is Squaresoft's action RPG adventure, Brave Fencer Musashi.

Most likely put into production as a kneejerk reaction to the release of Nintendo's *Zelda 64*, Brave Fencer has all the makings of yet another classic release. Well, that is if you are willing to ignore the simple fact that the game is currently only available on import and is rendered almost completely incomprehensible by the huge amount of text on display, which is in Japanese!

What On Earth?

Based upon the adventures of the legendary swordsman, Miyamoto Musashi, the titular Brave Fencer, he first must find his way home and then embark upon an attempt to rescue an imprisoned princess. This quest involves wandering around polygon landscapes, interacting with characters, and fighting monsters, all finished off with a bit of role-playing sparkle. Fortunately, amongst these more traditional elements lie some inventive thrills and spills. Between the exploration and interaction, the player will face some refreshingly different challenges. Fiendishly simple puzzles and basic combat accompany some trademark platform thrills when they come out to play. Touching upon the basics of the ever popular platform genre, the player will face countless obstacles as they push towards the inevitable confrontation





FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: Large, rolling balls are always a welcome touch in any game or sporting underwear; shades of Mario 64 as the camera swaps positions numerous times; the first end-of-level boss is impressive to the eye but hardly taxing to the grey matter, a pattern which continues throughout.

ER MUSASHI

ABOVE: Musashi offers a useful piece of advise – shame it makes no sense.

with one of the numerous end-of-level bosses. Hardly ground-breaking, these bouts of platform nonsense are made more enjoyable because they've been taken completely out of context.

The fusion of these two infinitely different staples of gaming is surprisingly painless, making the outcome undeniably enjoyable and a real aid to the gameplay.

Do What, Mate?

Take this for example. Just as the endless wandering from one generic log cabin to the next searching for the magic key starts to become a chore, the game will flip into platform mode. With rolling logs to be jumped, baddies to be slashed and gold to be collected, the memory of the log cabin episode is erased. Hats off to Square for pulling off what must have been a difficult task, the diverse ingredients complimenting one another without souring the overall taste.

Visually, the game is hard to fault, featuring varied environments, fluid movement and typically bizarre character designs. The 3D engine is crisp and colourful, if a little lacking in detail, and is complimented further by the subtle use of light sourcing and spot effects.

With the utmost praise for the game itself, we sadly cannot award it a good score. Being an RPG-based romp, the need for character interaction is a must, thus incurring the use of huge amounts of Japanese text. The baffling dialogue builds a barrier between the gameplay and the non-Japanese speaking player to such an extent that you find yourself lost in the text, randomly pressing buttons hoping for a solution. Unfortunately, the rights to the game have yet to be picked up for the UK, so an English translation seems unlikely at present. Do not buy this unless you can understand the language or you'll be purchasing only half the game – what a crying shame.

LEFT TO RIGHT: To claim this magical sword is hardly tough, what would you do? The Fire boss is a complete git, but he does look the business.

Rescue The Princess.

What is it with these Japanese gaming heroes? Come on, would you risk life and limb to save a comic book Princess? No, of course you wouldn't, but ever since Mario met Princess Daisy things have never been the same. Maybe these Japanese royals are great in the sack or it could be a wealth thing, but at the end of the day, does that make it worth biting the big one for these grossly undersized, big-eyed mutants? We think not.

The Competition

Alundra –
Psygnosis' tribute to the SNES classic Zelda, not entirely successful, but a must for all retro gamers.

Final Fantasy VII –
More than a game, this is an experience. A re-invention of the role playing genre.

Breath of Fire III –
Old skool role player that doesn't deviate far from the well-worn path and is all the better for it.

Rated by James Gale

STATION

A fantastic game – but only for those of you who are fluent in Japanese.

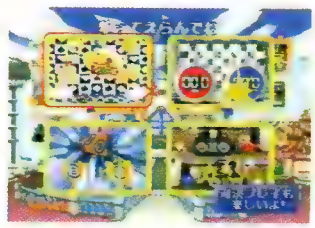
+ Three full courses of sweet, sweet eye candy
+ Instantly enjoyable, huge variety to gameplay
- Haven't got a clue as to what the hell is going on
- We may never see a English translation.

OUT OF 100

72

GUNBARL [POINT BLANK 2]

Point Blank hasn't been out for that long over here, yet Japanese gamers can already get their mitts on the sequel, Gunbarl. S'not fair!



FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: Even straightforward target shooting is never that straightforward; the level select screen stays basically the same as the original game; many levels require just one shot, but the target is nearly always moving; Dr Don and Dr Dan always find themselves in odd, or compromising situations.

Gunbarl (Point Blank 2)

Publisher: Namco

Developer: In-house

Release Date: Out now [import]

Game Type: Lightgun

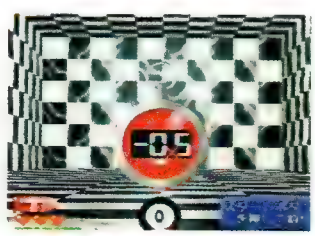
No of Players: 1-2

Price: £50 approx

Never play with guns, it's how accidents happen they say. Well, I just have to say bollox! How the hell are we supposed to play Gunbarl then? Well, you could try with a joypad, but the way to get the most out of this, the second in Namco's *Point Blank* series, is to use the official Namco GunCon. It may be pricey, but in a world filled with pale imitations, the GunCon proves to be the Desert Eagle of lightguns.

Until recently though, having a decent lightgun wouldn't have made a difference because there weren't even any half-playable games to use it on. That's until Namco released the excellent *Time Crisis* and more recently, the even better *Point Blank*. If you have any sense, then you'll already have a GunCon because you'll already have *Point Blank*. If not, stop reading now and go put things right!

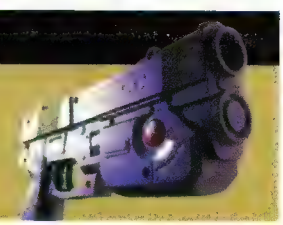
Gunbarl or its prequel do not follow the usual lightgun games yarn. Instead of being a full-on assault against a marauding mass of criminals or soldiers, it's actually a light-hearted, fairground style shoot-out between friends. Its main attractions are the



Compatibility

Packin' heat

You can play Gunbarl with almost any light-gun but it has to be said that the G-Con 45 is the best that you can get. It may be more expensive than the rest but buy it with Point Blank for extra value.



FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: Shoot the barrels before the Doctor gets squashed. Or alternatively don't, and watch the annoying little shit perish; one of the new levels requires you to simply fill this house full of lead. Wanton destruction. Nice!

massive variety in the levels and the fact that playing with a bunch of friends and a gun has never been so much fun.

Fire at will

From shooting static targets to hunting piranhas and lions, Gunbarl never, ever gets boring. There are so many different levels that appear at random, you may even see a level for the first time after months of playing. The various different modes of play, number of levels and pure sociability give Gunbarl its major draw, and just like *Point Blank* it's almost impossible to put that GunCon down once you've picked it up.

Gunbarl isn't so much a sequel to *Point Blank* though, it's more of a new collection of levels. But then, what can you do with a lightgun game? The gameplay is bound to stay similar to the original. Namco have made a huge effort to make the new levels as varied as possible, which means looking at things from a few different angles.

In the first game for instance, one level had you shooting a matching picture of an animal as it popped up. Now though, instead of looking at a picture to match the animal, you actually have to match them by the sound that they make. Another level on *Point Blank* requires you to shoot the numbers one to fifteen in order. In Gunbarl though, you have to shoot the answers to small sums. A bit like being at an American school really – guns and sums.

MAIN: The old cardboard cut-out gangster targets are back, as are the ninjas. There are also some cowboy ones for you to blow apart now.

Sharp shooter

As well as taking a new approach to the existing levels, there's a plethora of brand new levels for you to take on. It could be shooting a stopwatch at a certain time, blowing away space-bound moving targets or more likely, getting Dr Don and Dr Dan out of the trouble that they invariably get themselves in. These two Livingstone-inspired explorer characters often find themselves at the jaws of death, and the only way to save them is with some extremely sharp shooting.

Finding fault in Gunbarl is a hard job. The graphics are colourful and perfect for the game. The sound is of a genuinely high quality and the gameplay will have you popping caps forever. Gunbarl is simply a selection of new *Point Blank* levels, which although it has a whiff of laziness on Namco's part, does not alter the fact that this game is pure unadulterated arcade fun. Anyone with a GunCon and a Jap friendly machine should invest in this game, the rest of us can but wait. It'll be worth it though.

First Ten Minutes

For all intents and purposes you might just as well be playing the original *Point Blank*. In fact you feel a little cheated at first, but once all those juicy new levels kick in, Gunbarl really comes into its own.

The Competition

Point Blank –

Basically the same superb game with different levels. Still, it's officially available and is one of the most fun-filled games around.

Time Crisis –

More serious than *Point Blank*, but not quite as playable or enjoyable. It's still worthy of your cash though.

Die Hard Trilogy –

A huge shootout at Dulles airport that, even though just part of the whole game, is actually very good.

Rated by Saul Trewern

STATION

More superlative blasting action from Namco, the Kings of Lightgun Games.

\+ Massive variety of levels.
\+ Great party game.
\- The gameplay has hardly changed from the original.
\- Needs a lightgun to achieve full enjoyment.

OUT OF 100

87

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THE eDGE

Cheats never prosper. Yeah right. What about Bill Clinton, Maradona or Ben Johnson? Living proof that cheaters do prosper. If this lot can do it, there's no reason that you can't, which is why Station is here with The eDGE. Cheats never prosper? Yeah right.

BY ANY MEANS NECESSARY

GRAN TURISMO

GET ALL LICENSES:
To get all of the licences, start the B-1 licence track, press pause, then enter the following code:
↑, ○, ←, △, ↑, ↑, ○

COLIN MCRAE RALLY

The following codes should be entered as passwords at the name screen:

OPENROADS
Unlock all tracks.

TINFOILED
Chrome plated car.

NIGHTRIDER
Race all tracks at night.

MOONWALK
Higher jumps.

HOVERCRAFT
Hovercraft mode.

DIDDYCARS
Small cars.

KITCAR
Custom rally edition car.

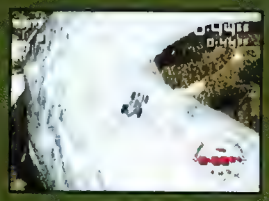
THEME HOSPITAL

LEVEL PASSWORDS

LEVEL	PASSWORD
1.	○, □, ○, ○, □, ○, □, ✕
2.	△, ○, □, △, △, ○, □, ○
3.	○, ○, □, □, ✕, △, ○, △
4.	□, ○, ○, □, ○, ○, ○, ○
5.	○, □, □, ○, ○, △, ○, □
6.	□, △, □, ○, ○, □, ○, ○
7.	□, △, △, ○, △, □, △, ○
8.	○, △, □, ○, △, ○, □, ✕
9.	△, □, △, △, ○, △, △, □
10.	○, □, ○, △, □, ○, ○, ✕
11.	△, ○, □, ○, △, □, ○, ✕
12.	○, □, ○, ○, □, ○, □, △

CIRCUIT BREAKERS

NIGHT RACING
Whilst selecting a track if you hold L1,L2,R1,R2, a new symbol will appear to let you know if the cheat has worked.

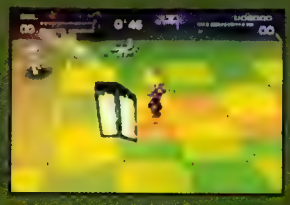


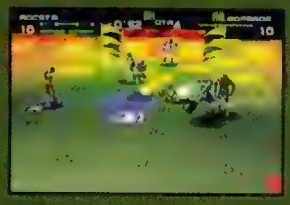
UNLOCK ALL SINGLE PLAYER TRACKS
Start the game, pause then highlight effects in the option menu. Now hold L1+L2.

FASTER CARS
On the track selection screen press △+○+✕+□. A picture of an engine will appear if the cheat has worked.

DEAD BALL ZONE

To get all of the stadiums go to the Italian option on the language selection screen. Now hold L2+R1+↑+□ for about ten seconds.



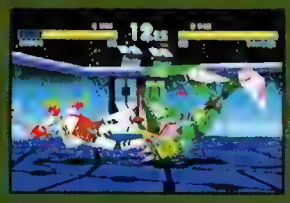


ZERO DIVIDE 2

PLAY AS NECO OR MODOKI
Simply complete the game using Nox and Eve respectively to get this cheat!

DIFFERENT CHARACTER COLOURS
Whilst holding select on controller 2 press ✕, ○, □, △, L1, L2, R1, R2 at the character select screen.

ADDITIONAL LEVELS
You can obtain two new levels after the game is completed under each difficulty level. This means that up to six new levels can be won.



R-TYPES

LEVEL SELECT:
Highlight the "R-Type" or "R-Type II" option on the title screen. Now press L2,R2 Start the game and press start on the joy-pad. Any level, including the ending FMV sequences,can now be chosen

TURBO MODE:
Press Start to pause either game. Hold L2 and press
→, ↑, →, ↑, ↓, ←, ↓, ←, ○

SLOW MOTION:
Press Start to pause game play in R-Type or R-Type II. Hold L2 and press
→, ↑, →, ↑, ↓, ←, ↓, ←,○.

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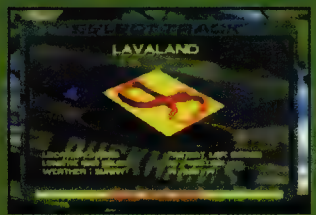
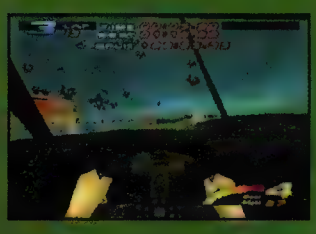
CMDISCO Volcanic track	GONGOGO All cars unlocked	XBOOSTMF Fast mode
JHAMMO All tracks unlocked	TANK Shoot other cars	CMFOLLOW Film camera view
CMLOCK No tracks unlocked	CMCHUN Go-kart mode	CMMICRO Micro Machines-type view
CMCOPTER Helicopter view	CMMAYHEM Aggressive cars	CMUPSIDE Upside down view
CMTOON Cartoon background	CMHANDY Big hands	





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- MDK
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- N20
- Nuclear Strike
- One
- Ray Storm
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- Soviet Strike
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- Z

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Tenchu Stealth Assasins

Stealth Assasins

Stealth Assasins

Decapitate your foe in style with this complete guide to Activision's stunning ninja stealthfest, Tenchu...

EXPLODING FISTS

Both characters have different moves, strengths and weaknesses, so choose wisely. It's also a good idea to go to the training mode and practice a little to find the ninja that suits you best..

RIKIMARU

His name means "The wheels of strength". His weapon can do a lot more damage than Ayame's, so he stands a greater chance in the heat of battle. This doesn't make him an altogether better character though, because overall you will need more than just good combat skills.

AYAME

Her name means "The colourful girl". She is much swifter in battle than Rikimaru so stands a greater chance of escape, and she also has a longer jump. Her weapons are weaker than Rikimaru's but can be utilised faster. She is also more adept at the stealth aspects of Tenchu.

KENJUTSU NO GATA -
The Way of Swordplay.

Although remaining unseen at all times is always the best option, there are times where you will have to fight. When this occu... there are a few things worth mentioning:

– Always study the enemy before making your move, it is only too easy to drop down from the rooftops just as the enemy turns around. Some will behave more unpredictably than others and these are the ones to watch out for.

– Always try to attack from behind. It is possible to strike before you get close, this will avoid the cut sequence moves and allow a quicker escape.

– Rolling off from a roof is the quickest way to move in for an attack, if you drop down normally your character will take a while to sta...

– Blocking is important, when an enemy is wielding a huge sword at you it is better to take a cautious approach.

– There are numerous attack moves you can use, some are more powerful than others so get used to which ones are better for a more effective attack.

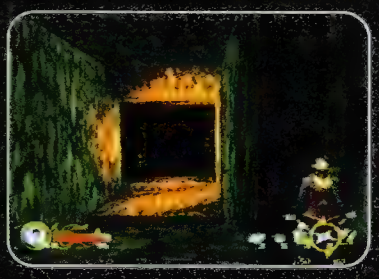
If you repeatedly press the attack button you will do a series of different moves, the third in combination is always the most powerful.

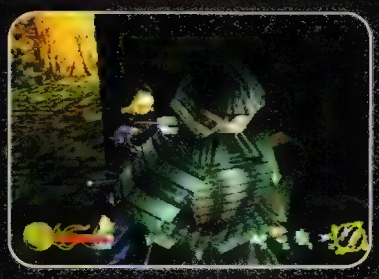
– A move worth practising is the flip jump, this allows you to jump forward and turn around in mid-air. Press Down, Up, and X in quick succession.

SHINOBI-ASHI NO GATA -
The way of the stealthy steps

Stealth is the most important part of the gameplay. Remaining undetected leads to more points and less confrontation. The ideal way to move about whenever the enemy is near is to use the crouch (stealth) move. This is good for slow, precise positioning. Always use the roll move to cover a greater distance, it is silent and quick.

Using the stealth move against a wall enables you to stand with your back to a wall. You can then move towards a corner to look behind you and see if anyone is patrolling the area. When you want to make your move, it is best to roll away from the wall by dabbing left or right twice. This will set you facing in the direction you were looking from behind the wall, and it is less clumsy than trying to manoeuvre yourself around the corner.





GAME: Tenchu Stealth Assassins
GAME TYPE: Stealth-'em-up
PLAYERS: One
CONTROLLER: Analogue/Dual Shock Compatible
SECRET RATING: 10 Secret Weapons
COMPLETION TIME: 3-4 Weeks

TENCHU CHEATS

INCREASE ITEM CAPACITY TO 99
On items screen press - ○,○,△,△,⇨,⇨,⇧,⇩

UNLOCK ALL HIDDEN ITEMS
On items screen press - ○,○,△,△,⇨,⇨,⇧,⇦

INCREASE ITEM INVENTORY
On items screen press - ○,○,△,△,⇨,⇨,⇧,⇨

RESTORE HEALTH
Pause the game and press - ○,○,△,△,⇨,⇨,⇧,⇦

UNLOCK ALL LEVELS
On Mission Select Screen press - ○,○,△,△,⇨,⇨,⇧,⇨ while holding the R1 button.

ENABLE JAPANESE VOICE OVER
On Mission Select Screen press - ○,○,△,△,⇨,⇨,⇧,⇩ while holding the L1 button.

ENABLE ENEMY LAYOUT SELECTION SCREEN
On Mission Select Screen press - ○,○,△,△,⇨,⇨,⇧,⇦ while holding the L2 button.

LEVEL ONE: PUNISH THE EVIL MERCHANT
OBJECTIVES: Find and kill Echigoya, the evil merchant.

STRATEGY: There is one very easy way to complete this level, which is to ignore all enemies as much as possible. This will get you through the level quickly. As this is a game of stealth, anyone vaguely interested in the principle of the game will want to take their time. It is worth doing this as being seen is very easy - the best strategy is to take your time and scour the level completely. The more Undetected Kills you can get, the higher your score will be. You will nearly always be seen a few times, but killing undetected will make up for the score lost in sightings.

Watch out for the innocent women that wander the grounds as they can be more aware than the guards. If a woman sees you, she will let out a shrill scream to alert the guards nearby. Once she screams, you're rumbled!

Always use the rooftops and never spend more time than it takes to cut someone's throat on the ground. Remember that the grappling hook is your best friend at all times. Watch and study the enemies until you know you won't be seen when you go in for the kill.

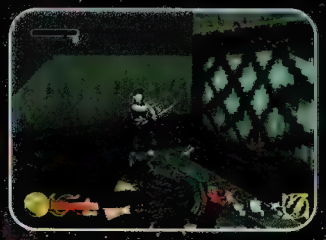
The Evil Merchant Echigoya resides in the biggest of the buildings, and luckily for you they have left an upstairs window open. This is the way to enter the building, and in the upstairs room is a hatch in the floor where you can see the lecherous fool. Jump down and give him a surprise!

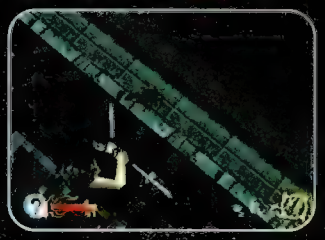
Being a coward, Echigoya calls on his bodyguard to defend him, and as the bodyguard enters he slips out of the door. The bodyguard will attack you with a large sword shortly after his entrance - his attack consists of two slashes which are easily blocked.

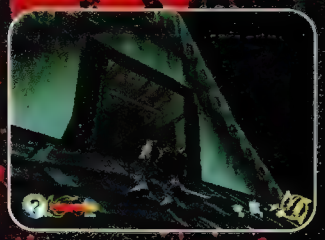
It is a good strategy to hit him just before he goes to take the first swipe, if he blocks just keep hammering away at him until he dies a bloody death.

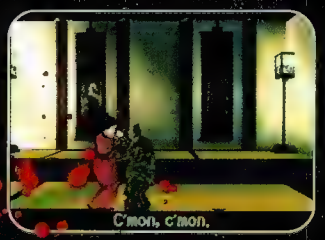
Once the bodyguard is out of the way, you must find Echigoya. He has hidden in one of the warehouses. There are four of them in an enclosed area but you can only enter two, so go into the house that is nearest to the garden wall to find Echigoya.

Echigoya has a gun - this can do quite a lot of damage if you are hit, but the old man is slow, so just go in blades a-slashin' until the greedy old codger keels over and dies.







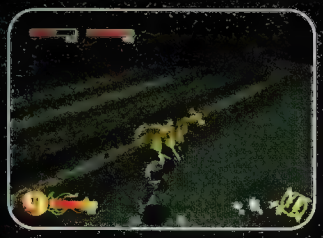


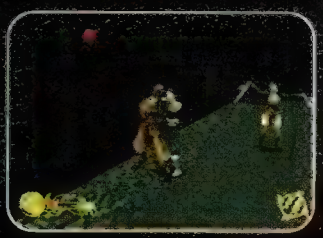
LEVEL TWO

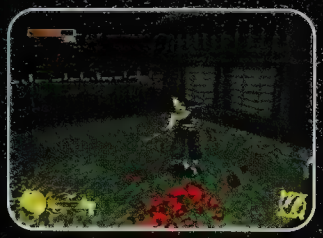
OBJECTIVES: Deliver the message and get from one side of the village and across the bridge to the other side.

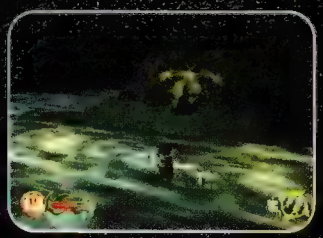
STRATEGY: You will start this level at the very far left side of the village, you will need all your ninja skills in order to get to the bridge undetected. You will be up against ninjas in this level – they patrol the side alleys, main roads and rooftops. Again, the best technique for a good score is to use the rooftops to get about, and always look around you using the detection circle at the bottom to judge how close you are to an enemy. This can often be the only way of knowing how close someone is. There is an easy route that won't win you many points; head down the left side of the level taking out just a few guards along the way until you reach the bridge. If you get through completely undetected you should score enough to gain an extra weapon.

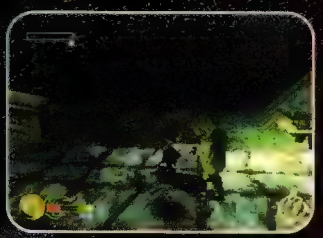
By far, the more enjoyable and rewarding way to play this level is to try to weave your way through the village, heading back and forth, clearing a small area at a time. This way, if you are seen, the enemies won't all come trundling in from the side streets.











LEVEL THREE

OBJECTIVES: Set the prisoner free! (The prisoner being the opposite character to the one you are playing of course!)

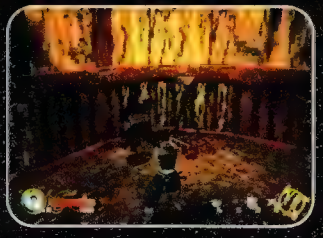
STRATEGY: This is quite a big level, so make sure you take some supplies – some health, a few bombs and some shurikens should do the trick. You start this level in a forest, and if you look at the map you will notice one main cave leading off with many windy corridors. There are two other caves which contain some pickups. Beware of wolves – they are more astute than the dogs and have much better eyesight. They are patrolling the forest along with a few guards. Use the trees to your advantage, take out the guards before going into the main cave, and once inside the caves, watch out for sudden drops – if you fall down one of them it spells instant death! Always use the grappling hook to get over holes rather than jumping them as this can be unreliable and will often lead to your death.

Check all the cells for enemies on the way through the caves, the guards are often sleeping on the job, so these give you an effortless undetected kill, which is never to be passed up!

When you reach the narrow bridge about halfway into the tunnel, take the door on the right. Don't try and jump it though, and don't forget to always use the grappling hook.

Once through the door, make your way through to the boss which is at the very end of the path.

The boss will have a bear with him – watch out for him as he has some very powerful moves. It is a good idea to take out the bear first if you can, as it will only hinder you when trying to fight the actual boss. Bombs are a good weapon to use on these two, they will often gang up on you. Throwing a bomb in between them will result in them both taking damage. The boss has a few moves on him; he will spin his weapon in a circular motion which will really smart bad if it hits you, so beware! Try to take the opportunity to attack just as he goes to strike you, this way he is left open to your attack almost every time.



LEVEL FOUR

OBJECTIVES: Cross the checkpoint.

STRATEGY: This is a very tricky level. Initially you will fight a young girl who is guarding the entrance. This is relatively simple to do although she does wield a huge blade. Attack her when she is about to strike you and you should have a successful blow. As this is the very beginning of the level, you can always restart it if you do badly.

Once the young girl is dead you are free to enter the complex. You can do this by either heading through the gates or grapple on to the top of the wall and check the area. Once inside, you have two main routes you can take – either head right using the trees and the hut as cover, or stay left and head past the first lookout point up to the second.

Because the layouts can be so varied it's hard to say what the best way to go actually is, but there are some obvious points worth mentioning.

The bridge is your first destination, you can get to it from numerous directions. Either from the right past the hut or from down by the river up the hillside, it all depends on how the enemies are laid out which route is the best. There is nearly always someone on the second lookout point just beyond the first. Take him out before anyone else but beware of others nearby. You can use the lookouts as cover – although you can see through them, no-one else can, so use this to your advantage.

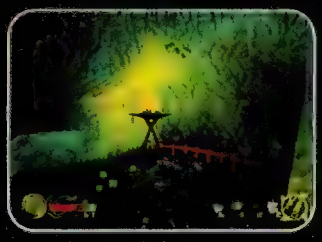
If you choose to take the hillside route, you can use the stones for cover as well as the trees leading up the hill. Personally I would recommend the other route past the hut, as you have a lot more cover to work with. After crossing the bridge successfully, make your way towards the bamboo. You can use the bamboo plants as cover, although it doesn't look like you can.

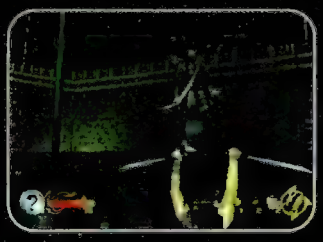
Be very careful as you approach the pit at the end of the bamboo section as there are often multiple enemies in this area. If there is a man sleeping in the middle, make sure you leave him until last – as long as you're quiet, he should remain asleep until you are ready to kill him.

Just after this bit is the checkpoint, which is patrolled by two guards. They vary in their positioning but they are always there. Use the bamboo on the left side to approach the lookouts, hide behind them and make sure you take them both out before passing through the gate or the trouble will follow you in. When you have taken everyone out, pass under the gate and prepare to fight.

The person waiting for you really not very happy as he is the brother of the girl you killed earlier and he wants to get his own back.

This battle is relatively straightforward. Guard when necessary, use the strike when being struck technique, and this will usually cut short his attack and allow you to get a few hits in. There is always enough room for you to get away in case you need to take some health, when he will just stand and say "Is that it?" Then once you are fit, you can show him it is not!





LEVEL FIVE

OBJECTIVES: Execute the corrupt minister and his bodyguard.

STRATEGY: You start this level from outside the main complex, grapple to the nearest rooftop but watch out for an enemy just over the wall next to the nearest house. Your mission here is to find the corrupt minister, but first you must find his bodyguard.

He is located next to the well north of the main building. It is possible to just take him out and then head straight for the boss, but this is far less fun than exploring the whole level.

The main building in the centre of the area has a lot of rooms with many a guard lurking. There are some fantastic opportunities for sneaky kills on this level as there are so many places to hide, and note that there are also a few guards sleeping in some of the rooms.

The best thing to do with this level is to stay on the rooftops for the majority of the time and only come down to make a sneaky kill.

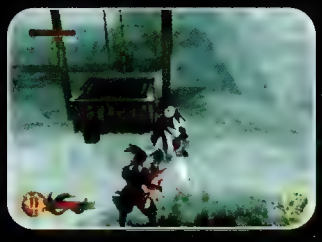
Beware of archers on this level, as there are many of them scattered around the perimeter and hidden in crafty places.

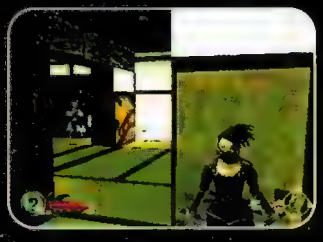
There are a few pick-ups in some of the houses, so it is worth clearing the level as much as possible to get all the goodies and a top score too.

Sometimes you will have to come down from the rooftops to explore the rooms in the main complex. This is where your "Ki" Meter comes in handy – use the numbers to judge how close the enemy is and use all your stealth to approach them. They will often patrol a main walkway or room, so it is worth approaching from a more discreet route, either through another nearby room or from the rooftops.

When you are happy with your performance, head towards the archers' firing range. This is where the boss is to be found after you have bumped off his bodyguard. It is located in the top left area of the map and it's possible to arrive via the rooftops.

When you do meet up with him, he will make a few idle threats and then start attacking you with his bow and arrow. He will either shoot up to three arrows in short succession if you are a short distance away from him, or hit you with his bow if you are close by – this is more of a panic move. The best technique is to get in close to counter his arrow attack and slash away at him like wildfire until the fool dies.





LEVEL SIX

OBJECTIVES: Infiltrate the Manji Cult

STRATEGY: Your mission here is to find the statue in the main building and climb to the top to find the jewel.

You start from the outside of the complex at the bottom of some steps. There is usually a crazed cultist on the steps leading up to the entrance – it is possible to hide in the trees at the side of the steps and then jump out and get him. Once this first loon is out of the way you can enter the complex.

The outside wall has a series of corridors leading off, so this is a good place to start as you will be safe from the guards in the middle. It also gives you the perfect opportunity to jump out from behind the wall and make them pay.

There are a quite a few crazed cultists dancing about in the corridors, so be careful! There is also a new type of guard on this level, they are much nastier than any that have come before.

Once again, use the rooftops to survey the area. There is a tall Japanese Temple in the top right corner of the level, it has a few guards patrolling it but you can grapple up to the top level where you will always find some pick-ups.

This level seems a lot bigger than it actually is, so always use the map if you get a bit disorientated. Check all the buildings for cultists and guards, they are often lurking in one corner of a room.

The primary building is the large tall building in the bottom right corner of the complex, this is where the statue is. You must grapple to the top of this to find the first boss.

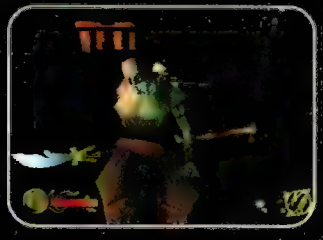
There are usually at least three enemies up on the balconies, it is imperative that you kill these guys or they will jump down later when you are trying to fight the bosses.

The best way to get up to the balconies is to aim the grappling hook well below the top of the platform. That way you will cling to the edge rather than suddenly appear at the top face to face with the enemy. Make sure that you check the balconies above the first lot for more enemies.

Once they are dealt with, climb to the top of the statue. The first boss will then appear and you will jump down to fight him. This boss has a large fan-type weapon which he swings at you to cause quite a bit of damage. Time your attack well so that when he goes in for the swing you can catch him out and get a few hits in. On the whole, this boss should be quite easy, but as he dies pathetically Onikage, a class fighter appears.

This guy is probably the toughest character you have to fight in the whole game, though he's not so tough on this level as he will be when you meet him again later. He will guard more than any other enemy has before, and he has some rather effective Kung-Fu on his side. You will find yourself facing the wrong way quite a lot because he dodges very well, so the best way to combat this is to either use the walls to jump off, or use the flip-jump to turn around and face him. A lot of side attacks are also useful as often he will be beside you rather than in front. If you can back him into a corner you can attack him many times at once. He will also sometimes have his back turned to you, so that is the perfect chance to go in for some combos.

You will only have to reduce his health bar by half before he takes to the rooftops outside and makes good with his legs.



LEVEL SEVEN

OBJECTIVES: Destroy the Foreign Pirates

STRATEGY: This level is essentially the same as the second level where you had to deliver the message, apart from the dock area. You start on the other side of the bridge that you crossed earlier, and your mission is to find the pirate on the ship in the docks.

There is one very easy way to do this level – make your way down the river towards the docks, cross the river early as there are numerous enemies close by and head across the rooftops on the right side of the river.

When you get to the end of the row of buildings facing the docks, you will need to kill a few guys. One is patrolling just below the house on the corner, another is standing in the entrance to the large C-shaped building next to the house you are on. Once these two are dead, you should make your way towards the largest ship in the dock. Use the wall that runs around the outside of the ship to reach it.

Beware, as there is a gunman on the wall at the end. If you use your cling-on-the-wall, you can shimmy along until you are hanging just below his feet – you can now jump up when his back is turned and finish him.

Once the last guard is dead, you are free to board the ship via the gangplank. Once on board, the pirate will jump down from above and attack you. This guy is all brawn and no brains, you can nearly always get a few hits in if you time it right when he goes in for an attack.

This level has a lot of enemies in it, so if you want to stick around and go for the maximum kills, this is a good place to do it. With many a handy back alley and rooftop to use, this is the ideal level to use your ninja skills on.

LEVEL EIGHT

OBJECTIVES: Cure the Princess

STRATEGY: This is probably one of the hardest levels so far, mainly because you are on a mountain which has the added danger of you can falling off easily. As you reach the mountain you will be faced with a narrow mountain path – one foot wrong here and it's curtains for you!

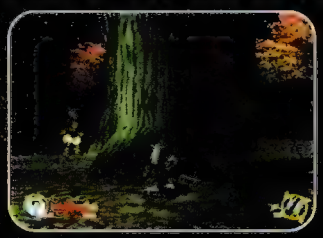
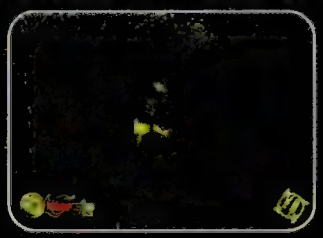
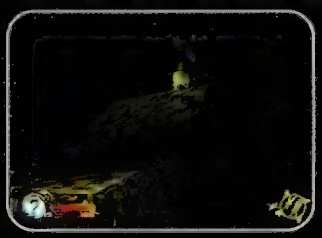
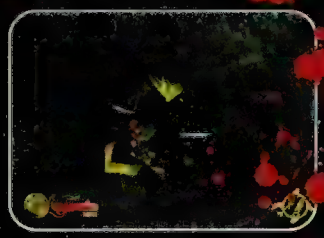
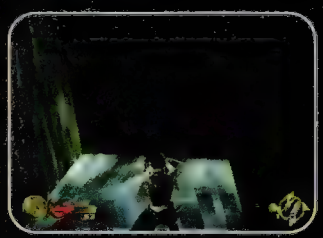
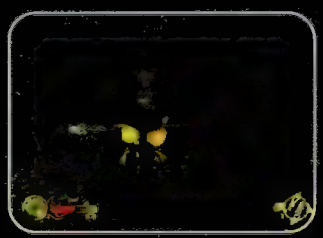
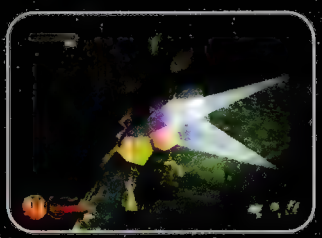
Make your way through the forest using the trees as cover, then when you get to the top of the hill, the path will narrow out to form a very slender passageway. Here you must remember to take the utmost care. The path eventually leads round to a thin bridge. Going straight over this is a very risky route to take as there is usually an archer at the end who can pick you off easily. Instead, grapple to the ledge with the tree on the edge, making sure you aim the grapple beyond the tree rather than simply on the side of the ledge. If the grapple isn't thrown beyond the tree, you will often just fall to your death.

Once up, you can make your way up the slope, and when you see the large waterfall with the pit below, look up to the right and you will see a passage. An enemy is wandering in the tunnel and this is the easiest direction to approach him from. Once he is dead, follow the cave to the other side of the waterfall and then grapple up. From here on in you will need to look around you for the route, making your way up patiently.

Once you reach the thin protruding ledge with the archer standing on it, kill him before using the grapple to climb up to the cave ledge rather than the small one in front of you.

There are a few enemies in these caves so stay stealthy. At the top of the first slope is a lethal drop to the right and another tunnel to the left, you will need to approach this bit with caution.

Make your way through the caves until you get to the last archer, who should be standing near an opening in the cave. Once he has been disposed of, you can make your way up the narrow walkway to collect the all-important flower. Well done, you have made it!

LEVEL NINE

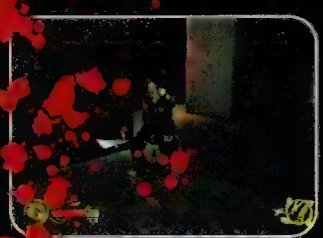
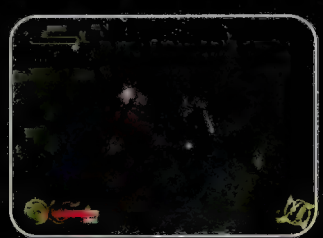
OBJECTIVES: Reclaim the Castle

STRATEGY: The object of this level is to reach the top of the castle tower, although this is obviously not as easy as it sounds.

You'll start the level outside the castle gates, and you can either grapple to the top of the wall above or risk entry through the gates. There is usually an enemy near the bridge; take him out and then make your way along the path. It is best not to try to scale the wall up to the buildings, that area is crawling with enemies. Instead, you should follow the path down to the edge of the river, where there is a tunnel by which you can enter – it will be guarded well, so take it slowly. Once into the tunnels, use stealth to kill anyone in there, and then make your way to the hole in the ground. There is water at the bottom and a rather vicious ninja lady – try using Poison Rice to lure her out with her back turned, then jump down and kill her. Next, make you way up the ramp at the end, taking care as you approach the top. Watch out in this area, there are many guards lurking, so be careful.

Through the left doorway from where you first come in from the basement is a flight of stairs. Carefully ascend the first few flights because there is another level at the top of the first flight with an enemy or two. Once you have cleared the area, head up the next set of stairs to the top where you will meet up with Onikage again – only this time he's under the affluence of incohol!

Make sure you have plenty of bombs and health, he is quite a fighter if you let him get near you, so the best thing is to do is bomb him as much as you can. If you take too long to kill him, he will heal himself fully and you will have to start all over again! Once you have shown him a thing or two, he decides that discretion is the better part of valour again.

LEVEL TEN

OBJECTIVES: Free the Princess "Kiku"

STRATEGY: Being the last level of the game, it is probably one of the hardest. You will certainly need to take lots of health and a few weapons too.

You start at the bottom of some steps – these lead up to the temple and there are quite a few guards on the way to look out for. Use the trees at the side to approach undetected.

When you come to a bridge just beyond the main gate, watch out! There is often an archer on one of the rocks in the river. Don't enter the water or you will be heard immediately! Use the pillars to stay hidden until you get to a doorway which leads to an open yard. There in the yard are two pillars close to you, use these to hide behind.

Just beyond the two pillars, there is a large, third pillar in the middle, and just beyond that are two more small ones. You can grapple to the top of these and look down undetected.

Once you pass through the next gates you will have to fight Onikage for the final time, so use the same tactics as before and don't let him re-heal himself. Once you have won, a hole will open up in the ground and you will jump down into it.

When you arrive in the caves, make your way slowly down the slope and take out the first guard. When you round the corner you will see a hole, across from the hole is usually a demon child. This is a tricky bit, as there is often someone in the hole as well. It might be worth using the chameleon spell here.

Once down the hole, continue into the caves, and as you near the bottom the caves branch off. Head for the centre passage and you will find yourself next to a river of lava, then head across to the narrow passage leading off. You will need to clear these corridors first, and when you have, head back to the main lava room via the second entrance and head down the slope – a guard is usually there, so be careful.

When you reach the next lava room, take the second passage on the left. At the end is a room to the right with a river of lava blocking the way. Jump over this and kill the guard that usually awaits. Continue down the slope and kill the guard there. Just beyond this is a narrow bridge with an archer on it. You must approach with caution as this guy is very hard to sneak up on.

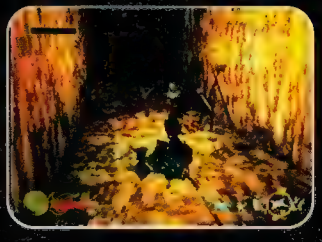
Head along the narrow path beside the lava and beware as you get further along as there is usually an enemy just below the end of the path. Once he is dealt with, you will need to cross the gap between the bridge and another cave. Use your forward roll jump as he has his back turned and drop down the hole, using the grappling hook to get you hanging from the ledge so you can sneak up on him. Drop down the hole again looking below you just in case, and continue down the corridor. You will come to a lava pit. Jump to the right to clear it, and once over you will see a cut sequence of a hole appearing in the ground – this is the final boss room.

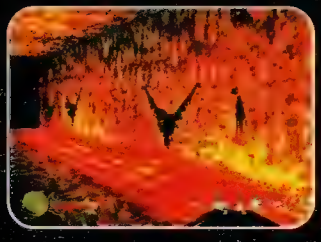
The boss is easier than you would perhaps think, yet he has three main attacks to look out for. Firstly, he has a lightning beam which will electrocute you if it hits, this leaves you stunned for a short while. Another is a morphing move; he will disappear then reappear behind you and take a slash at you with his great sword. His other attack is just a straight slash in your direction.

The best way to finish him is to keep moving, so that you don't get caught in his beam. Run in a circular direction to avoid his warping slash, which is very powerful, and never ever let your life fall below 40 points! When he raises his sword to do the lightning move, slash away at him. This is his weak spot, so exploit it as much as you can.

Once you have killed him, the opposite character to the one you are playing will show up and you will have saved the princess once and for all, or at least until the next time you play.

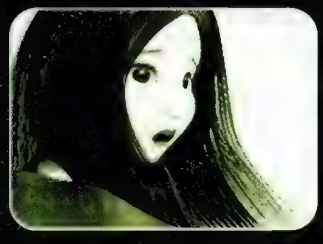
WELL DONE!

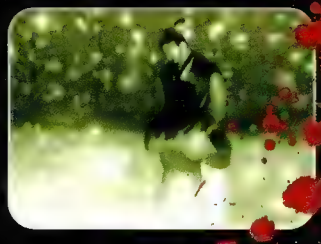




THE ENDING

When the Final Boss is defeated, players will be treated to an ending sequence, this is the ending for Ayame in which she meets up with Rikamaru. He has the Princess "Kiku" safe in his arms, unfortunately the underground caves are beginning to collapse. Using stealth, they show a two pair of clean heels and head down a darkened tunnel. A stone falls and blocks the passage, but luckily Rik has arms of steel and manages to prise the rock free allowing them both to escape into Daddy's arms!





BLOOD SWEAT AND SPLIT LIPS

BLOOD SWEAT AND SPLIT LIPS

"Don't concentrate on the finger or you will miss all of the heavenly glory."
BRUCE LEE - ENTER THE DRAGON

A STIFF FISTING IS POSSIBLY THE FINEST WAY TO SPEND AN EVENING, joypad in hand, engaging in combat of the polygon form until all foes are vanquished. The pure escapism found within the code of a beat-'em-up is, in my humble opinion, the most attractive and instantly appealing of all videogames. It matters not if you are a three stone weakling or a grossly overweight slob, once controller makes contact with console, you can become a major league butt kicker with a bad attitude to boot, and most likely some very nasty facial scars. With the likelihood of one tiring of instantly becoming one of the toughest guys on the planet being anorexically thin, these slices of PlayStation machismo have continued to enthrall audiences and fill tills the world over.

The current heavyweight champ is Namco's stunning *Tekken 3*, whilst by far the biggest palooka is Acclaim's pitiful *Rise 2*. All those that fall between these two extremes are a mixed litter, and unfortunately many should have been drowned at birth.

Digest the following words and learn from them, enlightenment will come in time.

BATTLE ARENA TOSHINDEN Sony
One of the launch titles for the PlayStation and the years have taken their toll. Actually, it was pretty poor in the first place. 58%

BATTLE ARENA TOSHINDEN 2 Sony
Shoddy sequel that fails to address any of the complaints levied against the original, possibly even worse. 49%

BATTLE ARENA TOSHINDEN 3 Sony
Marginally improved second sequel. Better visuals and average gameplay don't make for an attractive package. 62%

BIO F.R.E.A.K.S. GT Interactive
Great graphics, average gameplay and loads of gore. No bad attempt at a fully 3D *MK* rip off. 79%

BLOODY ROAR Virgin
Beat-'em-up from the creators of *Bomberman*, interesting touches throw this a lifeline. 80%

BUSHIDO BLADE Sony
A brave attempt to push the boundaries of the genre, tough to get into but once there, hard to ignore. 85%

CARDINAL SYN Sony
Blood soaked romp, its good ideas lost under the mediocre gameplay. 69%

CRITICOM Virgin
Fantastic visuals can't hide the simple fact that the combat engine is simplistic to the point of boredom. 65%

CROW 2: CITY OF ANGELS Acclaim
Literal translation of the shite film. Very shallow 3D scrolling romp, not bad to look at but a dog to play. 52%

DEAD OR ALIVE Sony
Great tits, but very little else to get excited about. Kind of reminds me of a girl I used to know. 70%

DYNASTY WARRIORS Ocean
Soul Edge rip-off. 60%

FIGHTING FORCE Eidos
Hugely disappointing attempt to bring the scrolling beat-'em-up to the PlayStation. 68%

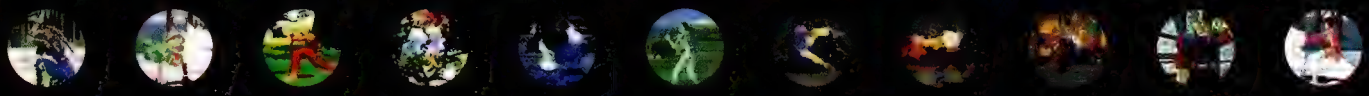
KILLING ZONE Acclaim
Classic movie monsters in a beat-'em-up romp, how could it have possibly failed? Sadly, it did. What a wasted opportunity. 40%

MARVEL SUPERHEROES Virgin
Old skool 2D title from Capcom, perfect for retro thrill seekers but very out of date in the light of *Tekken*. 72%

MORTAL KOMBAT 4 GT Interactive
Disappointing, it's more of the same but with some minor 3D touches. 60%

MORTAL KOMBAT TRILOGY GT Interactive
Every character, every move and every fatality. Shame they are all grossly out of date.
Fans only need apply. 64%

PERFECT WEAPON EA
Tries too hard to be different and ultimately falls on its arse.
Resident Evil and *Tekken* just won't mix. 69%



CHAMPS AND PUB FIGHTERS

The title of undisputed King of the Beat-'em-ups goes to Namco's third *Tekken* release, which is hardly surprising when you consider that the series has dominated the PlayStation since the original game's release. Only Capcom has shown anywhere near as much understanding of the genre as Namco, but their move into the next generation with *Street Fighter* series has proved to be problematic. Therefore *Tekken 3* walks away with top honours, with *Tekken 2* regarded as the number one contender.

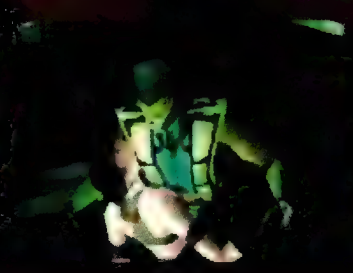
The tail end of the genreis clogged up with such forgettable bargain bin fodder as the worst PlayStation title ever, *Rise 2* and the equally poor monster mess *Killing Zone*, also from Acclaim.

CHAMPIONSHIP CONTENDERS

TEKKEN 3
TEKKEN 2
STREET FIGHTER ALPHA 2
BUSHIDO BLADE
SOUL BLADE

PUNCH DRUNK PUGS

RISE 2
KILLING ZONE
BATTLE ARENA TOSHINDEN 2
WAR GODS
CROW 2: CITY OF ANGELS



PSYCHIC FORCE Acclaim
Inventive romp that doesn't quite fulfil its potential but continues to hold the interest. 74%

RISE OF THE ROBOTS 2 Acclaim
Pure crap, 100% proof. Beyond redemption. 10%

SPAWN: THE ETERNAL Sony
Sparse levels and limited bursts of beat-'em-up action leave the player with little to enjoy. 62%

SOUL BLADE Sony
A true visual treat, this weapons-based romp is limited by the poor control method. 84%

STAR GLADIATOR Capcom
It's OK, but there are far better titles out there, buy only if you have far too much money. 71%

STARS WARS: MOT Virgin
What a waste of the Star Wars license. It looks great, sounds fantastic and plays like a dead puppy. 60%

STREET FIGHTER ALPHA Virgin
One of the most enjoyable single-player romps around, just keeps on giving and giving. 87%

STREET FIGHTER ALPHA 2 Virgin
Minor improvement upon the original code, with more characters and much improved visuals. 89%

STREET FIGHTER COLLECTION Virgin
Not everyone's choice of games, but still great value for money. 81%

STREET FIGHTER EX Virgin
Capcom's legendary series steps into the world of 3D, not quite on target. 83%

TEKKEN Sony
Once the mighty king of the beat-'em-up genre, rendered out of date by the far superior sequel. 82%

TEKKEN 2 Sony
See above for details. 91%

TEKKEN 3 Sony
This is the one, buy this title above all others, a must have and possibly the finest beat-'em-up ever. Impossible to fault. 96%

TOBAL NO. 1 Sony
Visually impressive and rather original, just lacks that certain little something. 81%

WAR GODS GT Interactive
Imagine *Mortal Kombat* in 3D but even worse than you remember it to be. Please read as crap. 50%

X-MEN: COTA Acclaim
Street Fighter meets comic book heroes, wonderful optical effects but shallow gameplay. 81%

ZERO DIVIDE Ocean
Robots locked in mortal combat, it must have sounded great on paper. 65%

BACKGROUND IMAGE SUPPLIED BY RICK BAKER, EASTERN HEROES.

HALLELUJAH! for the Station Bible

So, you walk into your local games emporium with a wad of used notes in your pocket, just waiting to be spent on the latest black slab of PlayStation gaming. But, as you home in on the PlayStation section it suddenly dawns on you that you haven't got a clue what's good and what's utter pap. Too bad you didn't consult your Station Bible first.

Every two months we will be printing an updated version of this comprehensive guide to PlayStation gaming, providing you with a suitably irreverent overview of what titles are still worth a shufty and what are best banished to the bargain bins.

A

ACE COMBAT 2
SONY • FLIGHT SIM • 1 PLAYER
Limited but entertaining arcade flight sim.

ACTUA GOLF
GREMLIN • SPORTS SIM • 1–4 PLAYERS
A well conceived and playable golfing sim.

ACTUA GOLF 2
GREMLIN • SPORTS SIM • 1–4 PLAYERS
Excellent update, one of the best genre titles available.

ACTUA ICE HOCKEY
GREMLIN • HOCKEY SIM • 1–4 PLAYERS
Average hockey sim, swamped by its competition.

ACTUA SOCCER
GREMLIN • FOOTY SIM • 1–4 PLAYERS
One time market leader, now plain average.

ACTUA SOCCER CLUB EDITION
GREMLIN • FOOTY SIM • 1–4 PLAYERS
Poor pseudo-sequel, with new teams and little else.

ACTUA SOCCER 2
GREMLIN • FOOTY SIM • 1–4 PLAYERS
Not the vast improvement we anticipated.

ADIDAS POWER SOCCER
PSYGNOSIS • FOOTY SIM • 1–4 PLAYERS
Poor football romp, with the dubious benefit of special moves.

ADIDAS POWER SOCCER '97
PSYGNOSIS • FOOTY SIM • 1–4 PLAYERS
It's the same game with new teams and nothing else.

ADIDAS POWER SOCCER '98
PSYGNOSIS • FOOTY SIM • 1–4 PLAYERS
A reasonable sequel, marking a step in the right direction.

AGENT ARMSTRONG
VIRGIN • SHOOT-'EM-UP • 1 PLAYER
Blend of platformer and shoot-'em-up, short lived.

AGILE WARRIOR
VIRGIN • SHOOT-'EM-UP • 1 PLAYER
Very, very dodgy flight sim. Avoid.

AIR COMBAT
NAMCO • FLIGHT SIM • 1–2 PLAYERS
Perfect conversion of the dull arcade game.

AIR RACE
T•HQ • RACER • 1–2 PLAYERS
Poor attempt at blending flying and racing.

ALLIED GENERAL
MINDSCAPE • WAR • 1 PLAYER
Don't bother. Get C&C: Retaliation.

ALIEN TRILOGY
ACCLAIM • SHOOT-'EM-UP • 1 PLAYER
Average first-person blaster, wastes its potential.

ALL STAR SOCCER
EIDOS • PANTS • 1–2 PLAYERS
The poorest football game ever. Probably.

ALONE IN THE DARK
INFOGRAMES • ADVENTURE • 1 PLAYER
Classic adventure, now woefully out of date.

ALUNDRA
PSYGNOSIS • RPG • 1 PLAYER
Old style RPG that constantly delights.

ANDRETTI RACING
EA • RACING • 1–2 PLAYERS
Fun two player mode but not a lot. besides.

ARCADES GREATEST HITS
GT • RETRO COMP. • 1–2 PLAYERS
So-so nostalgia trip.

AREA 51
GT • SHOOT-'EM-UP • 1–2 PLAYERS
Linear light gun blaster, lacking in variety.

ARK OF TIME
TAKE 2 • ADVENTURE • 1 PLAYER
Poor point and click adventure – avoid.

ARMOURED CORE
SONY • SHOOT-'EM UP • 1–2 PLAYERS
Average Mech Warrior style romp.

ASSAULT
TELSTAR • SHOOT-'EM-UP • 1–2 PLAYERS
Contra in 2.5D, limited lifespan but fun while it lasts.

ASSAULT RIGS
PSYGNOSIS • SHOOT-'EM-UP • 1–2 PLAYERS
Atari's classic Battle Zone with next generation visuals.

ATARI CLASSICS
GT • RETRO • 1 PLAYER
More flashbacks of low quality gaming.

AQUANAUT'S HOLIDAY
SONY • SEA ANTICS • 1 PLAYER
Ground breaking sub-aquatic adventure.

AUTO DESTRUCT
EA • RACER • 1 PLAYER
Rather nice blend of driving and combat.

AYRTON SENNA'S KART DUEL
EA • RACER • 1 PLAYER
Brave track designs make this interesting for a while.

AYRTON SENNA KART DUAL 2
OCEAN • RACER • 1–2 PLAYER
Dire, an insult to the legend.

AZURE DREAMS
KONAMI • RPG • 1 PLAYER
16-Bit disappointment, Final Fantasy VII this ain't.

B

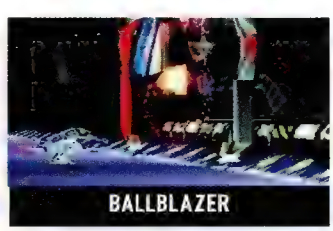
BABY UNIVERSE
SONY • DAY TRIPPER • 1 PLAYER
Way over-priced for what this is.

BATMAN FOREVER
ACCLAIM • BEAT-'EM-UP • 1–2 PLAYER
...and you thought the movie was bad.

ACE COMBAT 2

ACTUA GOLF

ABE'S ODDYSEE


BALLBLAZER

BATMAN AND ROBIN
ACCLAIM • ADVENTURE • 1 PLAYER
Not a bad use of the licence, but still a bit poor.

BALL BLAZER CHAMPIONSHIP
VIRGIN • FUTURE SPORT • 1–2 PLAYERS
Uninspiring update of the C64 hit.

BATTLE ARENA TOSHINDEN
SONY • BEAT-'EM-UP • 1–2 PLAYERS
Poor beat-'em-up, over shadowed by *Tekken*.

BATTLE ARENA TOSHINDEN 2
SONY • BEAT-'EM-UP • 1–2 PLAYERS
Fails to address the original's flaws

BATTLE ARENA TOSHINDEN 3
SONY • BEAT-'EM-UP • 1–2 PLAYERS
An improvement but still not worthy of recommendation.

BATTLE STATIONS
EA • STRATEGY • 1–2 PLAYERS
Battleships using a pen and paper is more fun, and cheaper.

BEDLAM
ACCLAIM • STRATEGY/ACTION • 1 PLAYER
Tries to be Syndicate but falls on it's arse.

BIO FREAKS
GT • BEAT-'EM-UP • 1–2 PLAYER
Enjoyable blood soaked combat, far better than MK4.

BLACK DAWN
EA • HELICOPTER SIM. • 1 PLAYER
Helicopter action which delivers for a while.

BLAM! MACHINE HEAD
CORE • SHOOT-'EM-UP • 1–2 PLAYERS
Addictive puzzler, endless in two player.

BLAST CHAMBER
ACTIVISION • ACTION/PUZZLE • 1–4 PLAYERS
Fun four player puzzle blasting.

BLAST RADIUS
PYGNOSIS • SHOOT-'EM-UP • 1–2 PLAYER
Arcade blast in the Colony Wars mode.

BLASTO
SONY • PLATFORM/ADVENTURE • 1 PLAYER
Painfully slow blend of jumping and blasting.

BLAZING DRAGONS
BMG • ADVENTURE • 1 PLAYER
Point 'n' click and not a lot else.

BLOODY ROAR
VIRGIN • BEAT-'EM-UP • 1–2 PLAYERS
Animal morphing fighter. Cool.

BRAHMA FORCE
JVC • 3D PLATFORM • 1 PLAYER
Tedious *Doom*-a-like.

BREAK POINT TENNIS
OCEAN • TENNIS SIM • 1–2 PLAYERS
Not as good as *Smash Court*.

BREATH OF FIRE III
OCEAN • RPG • 1 PLAYER
Doesn't break with tradition and is all the better for it.

BROKEN SWORD
SONY • ADVENTURE • 1 PLAYER
One of the best point 'n' clickers available.

BROKEN SWORD 2
SONY • ADVENTURE • 1 PLAYER
Better than the last.

BUBBLE BOBBLE/RAINBOW ISLANDS
SONY • RETRO • 1 PLAYER
Two classic games. A little dated now though.

BUBBLE BOBBLE 2
VIRGIN • PLATFORM • 1 PLAYER
More bubble based action. Or is that bobble?

BURNING ROAD
SUNSOFT • RACER • 1 PLAYER
Tried to be Daytona. Failed miserably.

BUBSY 3D
TELSTAR • PLATFORM • 1 PLAYER
Watch some paint dry instead.

BUSHIDO BLADE
SONY • BEAT-'EM-UP • 1–2 PLAYERS
The thinking man's fighter.

BUST-A-MOVE 2
ACCLAIM • PUZZLE • 1–2 PLAYERS
Superb puzzle game to rival *Tetris*.

BUST -A- MOVE 3
ACCLAIM • PUZZLE • 1–2 PLAYERS
Lacking in new ideas, but still enjoyable.

C

CARDINAL SYN
SONY • BEAT-'EM-UP • 1–2 PLAYERS
Average fighting romp, high on gore.

CARNAGE HEART
SONY • ACTION/STRATEGY • 1 PLAYER
Massive potential that wasn't fulfilled.

CASPER
SONY • ADVENTURE • 1 PLAYER
For the kids, but giving them this would ruin their birthday.

CASTLEVANIA X
KONAMI • PLATFORM • 1 PLAYER
For fans of the original series only.

CHEESY
OCEAN • PLATFORM • 1 PLAYER
Oi, Ocean...No!

CHESSMASTER 3D
MINDSCAPE • CHESS SIM • 1 PLAYER
By a real board for Christ's sake!

CHILL
EIDOS • SNOWBOARD SIM • 1 PLAYER
Awful snowboarding romp.
Do the words 'cash-in' ring any bells?

CHRONICLES OF THE SWORD
PSYGNOSIS • ADVENTURE • 1 PLAYER
Looks great, plays crap.

CIRCUIT BREAKERS
MINDSCAPE • RACING • 1–4 PLAYERS
Micro Machines clone.

CITY OF THE LOST CHILDREN
PSYGNOSIS • ADVENTURE • 1 PLAYER
Colourful adaptation of the cult movie. A little obscure.

CLOCK TOWER
ASCII • ADVENTURE • 1 PLAYER
Poor attempt at an interactive horror movie.

COLIN MCRAE RALLY
CODEMASTERS • RACER • 1–2 PLAYERS
Flawless simulation of the motor sport.

COLONY WARS
PSYGNOSIS • SHOOT-'EM-UP • 1 PLAYER
Graphically stunning space based combat.

COMMAND AND CONQUER
VIRGIN • STRATEGY • 1 PLAYER
Perfect conversion of the PC war game.

C&C: RED ALERT
VIRGIN • STRATEGY • 1–2 PLAYERS
Beats the original hands-down due to the link-up mode.

C&C: RETALIATION
VIRGIN • STRATEGY • 1–2 PLAYERS
Nothing new, but still the best in the series.

CONTRA: LEGACY OF WAR
KONAMI • SHOOT-'EM-UP • 1–2 PLAYERS
Nostalgic charm can't save this top down shooter.

COOLBOARDERS
SONY • SNOWBOARD SIM • 1 PLAYER
Enjoyable venture into snowboarding territory.

COOLBOARDERS 2
SONY • SNOWBOARD SIM • 1–2 PLAYERS
Far more satisfying than the original.

COURIER CRISIS
BMG • RACING/ACTION • 1 PLAYER
Wicked music and cool push-bike gameplay.

CRASH BANDICOOT
SONY • PLATFORM • 1 PLAYER
3D and 2D scrolling platformer, good fun.

CRASH 2
SONY • PLATFORM • 1 PLAYER
More platform adventures of Crash – nothing new.

CRIME KILLER
INTERPLAY • RACER/BLASTER • 1–2 PLAYER
3D Cops and robbers, quite a blast.

CRITICAL DEPTH
GT • SHOOT-'EM-UP • 1–2 PLAYERS
SingleTrac's *Twisted Metal* sinks to new depths.

CRITICOM
VIRGIN • BEAT-'EM-UP • 1–2 PLAYERS
Average beat-'em-up, lacking in ideas.

CROC
EA • PLATFORM • 1 PLAYER
Wannabe platform star ends up on the dole.

CROW 2: CITY OF ANGELS
ACCLAIM • ADVENTURE • 1 PLAYER
Poor scrolling beat-'em-up – ignore.

CRUSADER: NO REMORSE
EA • SHOOT-'EM-UP • 1 PLAYER
Risible isometric blaster. Forget it.

CRYPT KILLER
KONAMI • SHOOT-'EM-UP • 1–2 PLAYERS
Light gun blaster, redefines the word 'crap'.

CYBERIA
EA • ADVENTURE • 1 PLAYER
Out-dated PC port, don't bother.

CYBER SLED
NAMCO • SHOOT-'EM-UP • 1–2 PLAYERS
Awful conversion of an awful arcade game.

CYBERSPEED
MINDSCAPE • RACER • 1 PLAYER
Not worth talking about.

D

D
ACCLAIM • ADVENTURE • 1 PLAYER
Interactive movie, lacking in gameplay.

DARK FORCES
VIRGIN • SHOOT-'EM-UP • 1 PLAYER
Poor, first person Star Wars cash-in.

DARK OMEN
EA • STRATEGY • 1 PLAYER
Only serious strategists need apply.

DARKLIGHT CONFLICT
EA • SHOOT-'EM-UP • 1 PLAYER
Elite-inspired space bound adventure.

DARK STALKERS
VIRGIN • BEAT-'EM-UP • 1–2 PLAYERS
Average fighter.

DAVIS CUP TENNIS
TELSTAR • TENNIS SIM • 1–2 PLAYERS
Useless tennis simulation.

DEATHTRAP DUNGEON
EIDOS • ADVENTURE • 1 PLAYER
Commendable *Tomb Raider* style adventure.

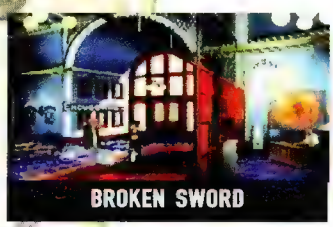
DEFCON 5
SONY • ACTION/ADVENTURE • 1 PLAYER
Awful space-based *Doom* style game.

DEAD BALL ZONE
GT • FUTURE SPORT • 1–2 PLAYERS
Violent twist of the *Speed Ball* legend. Cool

DEAD OR ALIVE
SONY • BEAT-'EM-UP • 1–2 PLAYERS
Huge breasts meet average beat-'em-up.

DESCENT
INTERPLAY • SHOOT-'EM-UP • 1–2 PLAYERS
Freedom of movement saves this ugly 3D shooter.

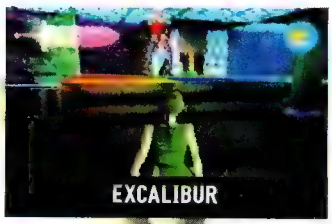
DESCENT 2
INTERPLAY • SHOOT-'EM-UP • 1–2 PLAYERS
Same old story, hard to recommend.


BROKEN SWORD

CITY OF LOST CHILDREN

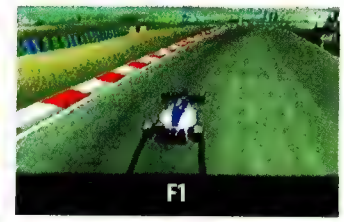
COLONY WARS

DESTRUCTION DERBY


EXCALIBUR

EXHUMED

FIFA '96


F1

DESTRUCTION DERBY
PSYGNOSIS • RACER • 1–2 PLAYERS
Original but lacking that certain something.

DESTRUCTION DERBY 2
PSYGNOSIS • RACER • 1 PLAYER
Enhanced sequel that almost succeeds.

DEVIL'S DECEPTION
SUNSOFT • 3D ADVENTURE • 1 PLAYER
3D RPG, which fails on all levels.

DIABLO
EA • ADVENTURE RPG • 1–2 PLAYERS
PC port of this semi-3D version of Gauntlet.

DIE HARD TRILOGY
EA • RACER/SHOOTER • 1 PLAYER
Three cool games for the price of one.

DISRUPTOR
INTERPLAY • SHOOT-'EM-UP • 1 PLAYER
Nice looking *Doom* clone, not bad at all.

DISCWORLD
PSYGNOSIS • ADVENTURE • 1 PLAYER
Python-esque point 'n' click adventure.

DISCWORLD 2
PSYGNOSIS • ADVENTURE • 1 PLAYER
More of the same basically.

DOOM
GT • SHOOT-'EM-UP • 1–2 PLAYERS
The original first-person blaster, time has done this few favours though.

DRAGONHEART
ACCLAIM • ADVENTURE • 1 PLAYER
Take a red hot poker and...

DUKE NUKEM
GT • ACTION/ADVENTURE • 1–2 PLAYERS
Classic *Doom* style game with an attitude.

DUKE NUKEM: TIME TO KILL
GT • 3RD PERSON ADVENTURE • 1 PLAYER
Slightly disappointing shooter.

DYNASTY WARRIORS
OCEAN • BEAT-'EM-UP • 1–2 PLAYERS
Cool characters and nice weapons. Not quite *Tekken 3* though.

E

EARTHWORM JIM 2
VIRGIN • PLATFORM • 1 PLAYER
Very 16-bit but still fun platform action.

EPIDEMIC
SONY • ACTION/ADVENTURE • 1 PLAYER
Doom style poop.

ESPN EXTREME GAMES
SONY • SPORTS/RACER • 1–2 PLAYERS
Road Rash on skateboards. As bad as it sounds.

EVERYBODY'S GOLF
SONY • GOLF SIM • 1–4 PLAYERS
Brilliant golf sim that just keeps giving.

EXCALIBUR 2555AD
TELSTAR • ADVENTURE • 1 PLAYER
Poor attempt to steal *Tomb Raider*'s fire.

EXHUMED
BMG • SHOOT-'EM-UP • 1 PLAYER
Very tough first person adventure.

EXPLOSIVE RACING
JMI • RACER • 1–2 PLAYERS
Follows *Burning Road*. More cars and tracks and that's it.

EXTREME PINBALL
EMPIRE • PINBALL • 1 PLAYER
Yeah, its pinball all right.

F

FADE TO BLACK
EA • ADVENTURE • 1 PLAYER
Once held in high regard, now a little long in the tooth.

FANTASTIC FOUR
ACCLAIM • BEAT-'EM-UP • 1–2 PLAYERS
There is nothing fantastic about this tired romp.

FELONY 11-79
ASC • RACER • 1 PLAYER
Wrecking racer; minor fare but not bad.

FIFA '96
EA • FOOTY SIM • 1–4 PLAYERS
Disappointing version of the Mega Drive classic.

FIFA '97
EA • FOOTY SIM • 1–4 PLAYERS
Slightly improved but not worth a second look.

FIFA: RTWC
EA SPORTS • FOOTY SIM • 1–4 PLAYERS
At last, a good FIFA tie-in, a must for fans.

FIGHTING FORCE
EIDOS • BEAT-'EM-UP • 1–4 PLAYERS
Shallow, scrolling beat-'em-up, hugely disappointing.

FINAL DOOM
GT • SHOOT-'EM-UP • 1–2 PLAYERS
Tougher version of the original code. For completists only.

FINAL FANTASY VII
SONY • RPG • 1 PLAYER
The premiere PSX RPG, one of the machine's best releases.

FIRESTORM
CORE • SHOOT-'EM-UP • 1 PLAYER
Cool but old helicopter blaster.

FIRO AND KLAWD
BMG • ADVENTURE • 1 PLAYER
Boredom inducing action/adventure antics.

FLOATING RUNNER
THQ • PLATFORM • 1 PLAYER
Pathetic 3D platform stuff.

FLUID
SONY • MUSIC MAKER • 1 PLAYER
Just too limited hold the attention.

FINAL DOOM
GT • 3D SHOOT-'EM-UP • 1 PLAYER
Doom sequel with new levels. Classic stuff.

F1
PSYGNOSIS • RACER • 1–2 PLAYERS
Solid reproduction of the fastest sport on the planet.

F1 '97
PSYGNOSIS • RACER • 1–2 PLAYERS
New season, new visuals and improved gameplay.

FORMULA KARTS
TELSTAR • RACER • 1–2 PLAYERS
It's better than Ayrton Senna's anyway.

FORSAKEN
ACCLAIM • SHOOTER • 1–2 PLAYERS
The game *Descent* should have been.

FRANK THOMAS BASEBALL
ACCLAIM • BASEBALL SIM • 1–2 PLAYERS
We all love baseball, right?

FROGGER
JMI • RETRO • 1 PLAYER
Help the frog across the road. Now in glorious 3D. Hmm.

FRENZY
SCI • SHOOT-'EM-UP • 1 PLAYER
Shallow free roaming blaster, with great sense of humour.

G

G-DARIUS
THQ • SHOOT-'EM-UP • 1–2 PLAYERS
Graphically dated, saved by classic gameplay.

GALAXIAN 3
NAMCO • RETRO • 1 PLAYER
Should have stayed in the arcade.

G-POLICE
PSYGNOSIS • SHOOT-'EM-UP • 1 PLAYER
Blade Runner in helicopters. Hard to fault.

GEX
BMG • PLATFORM • 1 PLAYER
Outdated 2D platformer. You have been warned.

GEX 3D
BMG • PLATFORM • 1 PLAYER
Re-ignites the fires of the once fallen genre.

GHOST IN THE SHELL
SONY • SHOOT-'EM-UP • 1 PLAYER
Fast paced techno spin off of the manga classic.

GRAN TURISMO
SONY • RACING • 1–2 PLAYERS
Close to perfect – racing fans take note.

GOAL STORM
KONAMI • FOOTBALL • 1–2 PLAYERS
How can the company who brought us ISS Pro do this to us?

GRAND THEFT AUTO
BMG • CRIME SIM • 1 PLAYER
Top down crime spree, original and addictive.

GRID RUN
VIRGIN • PUZZLE/ACTION • 1 PLAYER
Maze game saved by the two player mode.

GUNSHIP 2000
MICROPROSE • HELICOPTER SIM • 1 PLAYER
Tries to be realistic but doesn't quite succeed.

H

HARDBOILED
EA • SHOOT-'EM-UP • 1 PLAYER
3D shoot-'em-up of pathetic poorness.

HARDCORE 4X4
GREMLIN • RACER • 1–2 PLAYERS
Underdeveloped off-road racer.

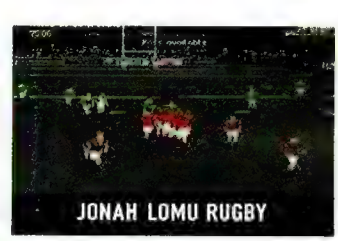
HEART OF DARKNESS
OCEAN • PLATFORM/PUZZLER • 1 PLAYER
Imagine Abe, and take away all the originality.

HERCULES
SONY • PLATFORM • 1 PLAYER
Captures the spirit of its Disney movie origin.

HERC'S ADVENTURES
VIRGIN • PLATFORM • 1 PLAYER
Old fashioned adventure, for retro fans only.

HERCULES

ISS PRO


JONAH LOMU RUGBY

KURUSHI

LIFEFORCE TENKA

LITTLE BIG ADVENTURE

LOST WORLD

MECH WARRIOR

MEXEN
GT • SHOOT-'EM-UP • 1 PLAYER
Dire port of the original PC code.

MI-OCTANE
EA • RACING • 1 PLAYER
Why convert such poor PC games? It's beyond us.

MYPER TENNIS FINAL MATCH
MICROPROSE • TENNIS SIM • 1–2 PLAYERS
Poor man's Pete Sampras.

I

IMPACT RACING
JVC • RACER • 1 PLAYER
Cars and guns are cool. But not here.

INCREDIBLE HULK
EIDOS • PLATFORM • 1 PLAYER
Foul top down adventure, avoid at all costs.

INDEPENDENCE DAY
EA • FLIGHT SIM • 1–2 PLAYERS
Repetitive flight sim, borrowing little from the movie.

IN THE HUNT
THQ • SHOOT-'EM-UP • 1–2 PLAYERS
Redundent 16-Bit style shooter.

INDY 500
JVC • RACER • 1 PLAYER
Arcade twist on the popular US motor sport.

IRON AND BLOOD
ACCLAIM • BEAT-'EM-UP • 1–2 PLAYERS
Words fail us, expect maybe shite.

IRONMAN XO MANOWAR
ACCLAIM • SHOOT-'EM-UP • 1 PLAYER
One of the worst PlayStation games ever.

ISS DELUXE
KONAMI • FOOTY SIM • 1–4 PLAYERS
Exactly the same as the 16-bit versions.

ISS PRO
KONAMI • FOOTY SIM • 1–4 PLAYERS
The PlayStation League winner, now available on budget.

IXMOOVD
LDA • PLATFORM • 1 PLAYER
Perfectly titled piece of tack.

J

JEREMY MCGRATH SMC
ACCLAIM • RACER • 1 PLAYER
Shoddy motor-cross sim.

JERSEY DEVIL
OCEAN • 3D PLATFORM • 1 PLAYER
Cool character with average gameplay. Worthwhile.

JET RIDER
SONY • RACER • 1–2 PLAYERS
Flawed racer that tries too hard.

JET RIDER 2
SONY • RACER • 1–2 PLAYERS
Sloppy sequel offering little over the original.

JOHNNY BAZOOKATONE
US GOLD • PLATFORM • 1PLAYER
Do we need another 2D platformer, errr nope!

JONAH LOMU RUGBY
CODEMASTERS • RUGBY SIM • 1–2 PLAYERS
The only PlayStation rugby title. Does the job well.

JUDGE DREDD
GREMLIN • SHOOT-'EM-UP • 1–2 PLAYERS
Poor light gun game with little to do with Dredd.

JUMPING FLASH
SONY • PLATFORMER • 1 PLAYER
Intriguing 3D platformer that almost succeeds.

JUMPING FLASH 2
SONY • PLATFORMER • 1 PLAYER
Improved visuals and gameplay – worth a look.

JUPITER STRIKE
SONY • SHOOT-'EM-UP • 1 PLAYER
Decidedly dated blaster.

K

KI ARENA FIGHTERS
T•HQ • KICK BOXING • 1–2 PLAYERS
Beat-'em-up based around kick boxing.

KILLING ZONE
ACCLAIM • BEAT-'EM-UP • 1–2 PLAYERS
Ooh scary! This slack beat-'em-up is nasty business.

KICK OFF 97
MAXIS • FOOTY • 1–2 PLAYERS
Forget it. There are far better soccer games around.

KICK OFF WORLD
FUNSOFT • FOOTY • 1–4 PLAYERS
Still doesn't live up to Actua and ISS.

KILEAK THE BLOOD
SONY • 3D ADVENTURE • 1 PLAYER
Pathetic Doom style fodder.

KILLING ZONE
ACCLAIM • BEAT-'EM-UP • 1–2 PLAYERS
Classic monsters meet shit beat-'em-up, the results speak for themselves.

KINGS FIELD
SONY • ADVENTURE • 1 PLAYER
1st person RPG. To be avoided.

KLONOA DOOR TO PHANTOMILE
SONY • PLATFORMER • 1 PLAYER
Hardly taxing but an enjoyable '2.5D' platformer.

KONAMI OPEN GOLF
KONAMI • GOLF • 1–2 PLAYERS
Arcade style golf. So-so.

KRAZY IVAN
PSYGNOSIS • SHOOT-'EM-UP • 1 PLAYER
Great presentation and no gameplay. Average.

KULA WORLD
SONY • PUZZLE • 1 PLAYER
Great puzzler but where's the multiplayer action?

KURUSHI
SONY • PUZZLE • 1 PLAYER
Another fab Sony puzzler, mate.

L

LEGACY OF KAIN
BMG • RPG • 1 PLAYER
Old school RPG with vampire lead...nice idea.

LETHAL ENFORCERS
KONAMI • SHOOT-'EM-UP • 1 PLAYER
Great conversion of the dire arcade games.

LITTLE BIG ADVENTURE
EA • ADVENTURE • 1 PLAYER
The charming PC title, perfectly ported.

LOADED
GREMLIN • SHOOT-'EM-UP • 1 PLAYERS
Maze based shoot-'em-up. Lacks variety

LOST VIKINGS 2
INTERPLAY • PLATFORM • 1–2 PLAYERS
Mix of platformer and puzzle solving adventure.

LEMAX
PSYGNOSIS • PLATFORM • 1 PLAYER
Lemmings inspired 2D platform. Why?

LONE SOLDIER
TELSTAR • SHOOT-'EM-UP • 1 PLAYER
No, not very good at all actually.

LUCKY LUKE
OCEAN • PLATFORM • 1 PLAYER
Great visuals but lacks originality.

M

MACHINE HUNTER
EIDOS • SHOOT-'EM-UP • 1–2 PLAYERS
Instantly inspires comparisons with Loaded.

MADDEN '97
EA SPORTS • AMERICAN FOOTY • 1–4 PLAYERS
Yawn-inducing NFL football sim.

MADDEN '98
EA SPORTS • AMERICAN FOOTY • 1–8 PLAYERS
Further instalment of American football sim.

MADDEN '99
EA SPORTS • AMERICAN FOOTY • 1–8 PLAYERS
Fans of the sport will appreciate this.

MAGIC CARPET
EA • SHOOT-'EM-UP • 1 PLAYERS
Carpet riding 3D adventure, frankly a little odd.

MARVEL SUPER HEROES
VIRGIN • BEAT-'EM-UP • 1–2 PLAYERS
Classic *SF2* gameplay with Marvel comic heroes.

MAXIMUM FORCE
GT • LIGHTGUN • 1 PLAYER
Stick to *Time Crisis* or *Point Blank*.

MDK
INTERPLAY • SHOOT-'EM-UP • 1 PLAYER
Technically stunning 3D shoot-'em-up.

MECHWARRIOR
ACTIVISION • SHOOT-'EM-UP • 1 PLAYER
Robots trudging around barren backgrounds.

MEDIEVIL
SONY • PLATFORM ADVENTURE • 1 PLAYER
A delight from start to finish.

MEGAMAN 6
OCEAN • PLATFORM • 1 PLAYER
16-bit platform action to be left on the shelf.

MEGAMAN X3
OCEAN • PLATFORM • 1 PLAYER
Same old story, see above for details.

MEGAMAN BATTLE AND CHASE
OCEAN • RACER • 1–2 PLAYERS
Tries to be Mario Kart and fails.

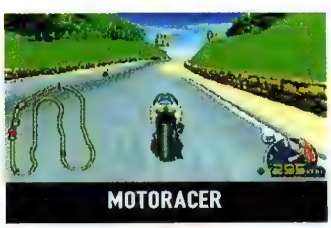
MEN IN BLACK
GREMLIN • ADVENTURE • 1 PLAYER
Laborious *Res Evil* inspired adventure.

MICRO MACHINES V3
CODEMASTERS • RACER • 1–8 PLAYERS
Fast-paced, madcap, 3D multiplayer racer.

MICKEY'S WILD ADVENTURE
SONY • PLATFORMER • 1 PLAYER
More 16-bit platforming. Why bother?

MONOPOLY
HASBRO • BOARDGAME • 1–4 PLAYER
A lot more expensive than the infinitely better boardgame.

MICRO MACHINES V3


MOTORACER

NAMCO MUSEUM

NEED FOR SPEED

MONSTER TRUCKS
PSYGNOSIS • RACER • 1 PLAYER
Successful blend of off-roading and track racing.

MORTAL KOMBAT TRILOGY
GT • BEAT-'EM-UP • 1–2 PLAYERS
Good value for die-hard fans.

MORTAL KOMBAT 3
GT • BEAT-'EM-UP • 1–2 PLAYERS
You might as well just stick with *Trilogy*.

MORTAL KOMBAT MYTHOLOGIES
GT • PLATFORM • 1 PLAYER
No.

MOTOR MASH
OCEAN • COMIC RACER • 1–4 PLAYER
Not as good as Micro Machines V3.

MOTO RACER
EA • RACER • 1–2 PLAYERS
Cycle racer, incorporating dirt and super bikes.

MOTORHEAD
GREMLIN • RACER • 1–2 PLAYERS
A furiously fast-paced racer.

MOTORTOON GP
SONY • RACER • 1–2 PLAYERS
Cartoony style overhead racer. Okay.

MOTORTOON GP 2
SONY • RACER • 1–2 PLAYERS
Whaddyathink?

MR BOOM!
JVC • PUZZLE • 1 PLAYER
Nice idea but very limited.

MYST
SONY • ADVENTURE • 1 PLAYER
Slow moving but intriguing.

N

N2O
GREMLIN • SHOOT-'EM-UP • 1–2 PLAYER
Tempest on acid, great music though.

NAGANO WINTER OLYMPICS '98
KONAMI • SPORTS SIM • 1–4 PLAYERS
Just like the British Olympic team – doesn't live up to expectations.

NAMCO MUSEUM VOL 1
NAMCO • RETRO • 1 PLAYER
Not bad.

NAMCO MUSEUM VOL 2
NAMCO • RETRO • 1 PLAYER
Worse.

NAMCO MUSEUM VOL 3
NAMCO • RETRO • 1 PLAYER
Even worse.

NAMCO MUSEUM VOL 4
NAMCO • RETRO • 1 PLAYER
I quit.

NAMCO MUSEUM VOL 5
NAMCO • RETRO • 1–2 PLAYERS
Anyone got a rope?

NANOTEK WARRIOR
VIRGIN • SHOOT-'EM-UP • 1 PLAYER
You'll be finished with this within the hour.

NASCAR '98
EA • RACING • 1 PLAYER
Improves greatly on the original.

NASCAR RACING
DOMARK • RACING • 1 PLAYER
Buy a 2CV instead.

NBA HANGTIME
GT • BASKETBALL SIM. • 1–4 PLAYERS
Average B-ball.

NBA: IN THE ZONE
KONAMI • BASKETBALL SIM • 1–4 PLAYERS
Looks good, plays average.

NBA: IN THE ZONE 2
KONAMI • BASKETBALL SIM • 1–4 PLAYERS
Improves on the original. Still not great though.

NBA JAM EXTREME
ACCLAIM • BASKETBALL SIM • 1–4 PLAYERS
Top arcade basketball action.

NBA JAM TE
ACCLAIM • BASKETBALL SIM • 1–4 PLAYERS
More top NBA Jam basketball.

NBA LIVE '96
EA • BASKETBALL SIM. • 1–4 PLAYERS
Loses out through poor controls.

NBA LIVE '97
EA • BASKETBALL SIM. • 1–4 PLAYERS
Better than the first game.

NBA LIVE '98
EA • BASKETBALL SIM. • 1–4 PLAYERS
Basically the same as the other two.

NBA PRO '98
KONAMI • BASKETBALL SIM • 1–4 PLAYERS
One of the better bounce-ball games available.

NEED FOR SPEED
EA • RACER • 1–2 PLAYERS
The cars save a very average racer.

NEED FOR SPEED 2
EA • RACER • 1–2 PLAYERS
Not as good as the original, but it still has those cool cars.

NEED FOR SPEED 3
EA • RACER • 1–2 PLAYERS
Best of the series.

NEWMAN-HAAS RACING
PSYGNOSIS • RACER • 1–2 PLAYERS
Doesn't quite live up to its F1 predecessor.

NFL GAMEDAY
SONY • AMERICAN FOOTY • 1–2 PLAYERS
If you're a fan, this is okay.

NHL '98
EA SPORTS • ICE HOCKEY • 1–8 PLAYERS
Nothing outstanding in this ice hockey sim.

NHL BREAKAWAY '98
ACCLAIM • ICE HOCKEY • 1–8 PLAYERS
3D ice hockey, again nothing special.

NHL FACE OFF '98
SONY • ICE HOCKEY • 1–8 PLAYERS
Playable but it doesn't set the world on fire.

NHL OPEN ICE
GT • ICE HOCKEY • 1–2 PLAYERS
One of the worst ice hockey games.

NHL POWERPLAY '98
VIRGIN • ICE HOCKEY • 1–2 PLAYERS
Worthy puck smasher.

NIGHTMARE CREATURES
SONY • 3D ACTION/ADVENTURE • 1 PLAYER
Deathtrap Dungeon set in London of the eighteenth century.

NINJA
EIDOS • ACTION/ADVENTURE • 1 PLAYER
Uninspring dose of the scrolling beat-'em-up.

NOVA STORM
PSYGNOSIS • SHOOT-'EM-UP • 1 PLAYER
Dire.

NUCLEAR STRIKE
EA • SHOOT-'EM-UP • 1 PLAYER
More Strike, probably the best in the series.

O

ODDWORLD: ABE'S ODDYSEE
GT • PLATFORM/PUZZLER • 1 PLAYER
The best platform/puzzler with a fart option.

OFF-WORLD INTERCEPTOR
BMG • SHOOT-'EM-UP • 1–2 PLAYERS
Why do you think we want to play crap 3DO ports?

OLYMPIC GAMES
US GOLD • SPORTS SIM • 1–4 PLAYER
It is hard to sum up the badness of this game.

ONE
ASC GAMES • SHOOT-'EM-UP • 1 PLAYER
Great visuals, pretty much standard gameplay.

ONSIDE SOCCER
TELSTAR • FOOTY • 1–2 PLAYERS
You know what we're going to say.

OLYMPIC SOCCER
US GOLD • FOOTY SIM • 1–2 PLAYERS
Don't bother, there's far better on the market.

OVERBLOOD
EA • SHOOT-'EM-UP • 1 PLAYER
Cool sci-fi adventure.

OVERBOARD
PSYGNOSIS • SHOOT-'EM-UP • 1–2 PLAYERS
Quirky original and fun, especially in multiplayer.

P

PANDEMONIUM
BMG • PLATFORM • 1 PLAYER
Scorned for its pseudo 3D graphics, but still a decent platformer.

PANDEMONIUM 2
BMG • PLATFORM • 1 PLAYER
Same gameplay style as the original, only with added psychedelics.

PANZER GENERAL
MINDSCAPE • WAR • 1 PLAYER
Tiresome wargame.

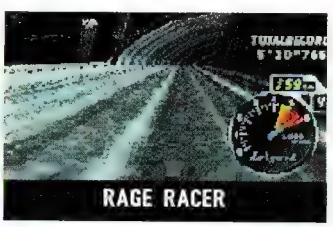
PARAPPA THE RAPPER
SONY • MUSIC • 1 PLAYER
An original as they come rapping game.

PEAK PERFORMANCE
JVC • RACER • 1–2 PLAYERS
Decent racer.

PERFECT ASSASSIN
GROLIER • ADVENTURE • 1 PLAYER
Bad, beyond redemption.

PERFECT WEAPON
EA • BEAT-'EM-UP • 1 PLAYER
It won't light your fire but it won't put it out either.

PGA TOUR '97
EA • GOLF SIM • 1–4 PLAYERS
It's a golf game, innit.



RAPID RACER

RAY STORM

RAY TRACER

RELOADED

PHILOSOMA
SONY • SHOOT-'EM-UP • 1 PLAYER
Average pseudo 3D shooter.

PHAT AIR EXTREME
FUNSOFT • SNOWBOARD SIM • 1–2 PLAYERS
Better than Chill, but that doesn't say a lot.

PITBALL
TIME WARNER • SPORTS SIM • 1–2 PLAYERS
Future sports. Not as good as *Dead Ball Zone*.

PITFALL 3D
ACTIVISION • 3D PLATFORM • 1 PLAYER
Doesn't quite hold the magic of the original Atari game, but a worthy effort nonetheless.

PLAYER MANAGER
ANCO • STRATEGY • 1–2 PLAYERS
'The pitch was no good...' and other such excuses.

POD
INTERPLAY • DOOM CLONE • 1 PLAYER
Doom clone with a sense of humour.

POINT BLANK
SONY • LIGHT GUN BLASTER • 1–2 PLAYERS
If you own a light gun buy this now.

PORSCHE CHALLENGE
SONY • RACER • 1–2 PLAYERS
Only one car and limited tracks let down a good racing engine.

POWERBOAT
INTERPLAY • RACING • 1–2 PLAYERS
When will we get a decent water based racer?

POWER MOVE WRESTLING
ACTIVISION • WRESTLING SIM • 1–4 PLAYERS
Old wrestler. Surpassed by now.

POWER SOURCE
SONY • COMPILATION • 1 PLAYER
Great value charity compilation.

POY POY
KONAMI • ARCADE ACTION • 1–4 PLAYERS
Superb multiplayer hurling fest.

PREMIER MANAGER '98
GREMLIN • FOOTY MANAGEMENT • 1–4 PLAYERS
Superb stats and numbers game.

PRIMAL RAGE
ACCLAIM • BEAT-'EM-UP • 1–2 PLAYERS
Dinosaurs are cool but not in this game.

PRO PINBALL
EMPIRE • PINBALL • 1–2 PLAYERS
Should be left in the arcades...

PRO PINBALL: TIMESHOCK
EMPIRE • PINBALL • 1–4 PLAYERS
...and this.

PROJECT OVERKILL
KONAMI • SHOOT-'EM-UP • 1 PLAYER
Boring but pretty shooter.

PROJECT X2
OCEAN • BLASTER • 1 PLAYER
Hectic 2D shoot-'em-up.

PSYCHIC FORCE
ACCLAIM • BEAT-'EM-UP • 1–2 PLAYERS
Could have been good, alas it's not.

PSYCHIC DETECTIVE
EA • ADVENTURE • 1 PLAYER
Interactive movie adventure. Leave.

R

RAGE RACER
NAMCO • RACER • 1 PLAYER
Surpassed of late, but still a classic.

RAGING SKIES
WARNER • ARCADE FLIGHT SIM. • 1 PLAYER
No variation.

RAIDEN
OCEAN • SHOOTER • 1 PLAYER
Looks terrible, plays okay.

RALLY CROSS
SONY • RACER • 1–4 PLAYERS
Never stood a chance with *V-Rally* around at the time.

RAPID RACER
SONY • RACER • 1–2 PLAYERS
Attempts to give us a cool water based racer, and just misses the mark.

RAMPAGE WORLD TOUR
GT • SMASH-'EM-UP • 1–2 PLAYERS
Solid but limited update of an old arcade game.

RAPID RELOAD
SONY • SHOOT-'EM-UP • 1–2 PLAYERS
one of the first PSX titles and, boy does it show.

RASCAL
PSYGNOSIS • PLATFORMER • 1 PLAYER
Too easy, limited and boring. Looks fantastic though.

RAYMAN
UBISOFT • PLATFORM • 1 PLAYER
Praised by many, but we don't know why.

RAY STORM
SONY • SHOOT-'EM-UP • 1–2 PLAYERS
Eye candy with a sour gameplay taste.

RAY TRACER
SONY • RACER • 1 PLAYER
It's not deep but it's certainly fun.

REBEL ASSAULT
VIRGIN • SHOOT-'EM-UP • 1 PLAYER
Why are Star Wars licences always so poor?

REDOOT
EA • ACTION/ADVENTURE • 1 PLAYER
The hoverboard adds a twist to this decent attempt at an original platformer.

REBEL ASSAULT 2
VIRGIN • 3D SHOOT-'EM-UP • 1 PLAYER
Star Wars based *Doom* clone.

RELOADED
GREMLIN • SHOOT-'EM-UP • 1–2 PLAYERS
Almost exactly the same as the original *Loaded*.

RESIDENT EVIL
VIRGIN • ADVENTURE • 1 PLAYER
The original survival horror game. Superb.

RESIDENT EVIL: DIRECTOR'S CUT
VIRGIN • ADVENTURE • 1 PLAYER
Blatant cash-in – a stop-gap release.

RESIDENT EVIL 2
VIRGIN • ADVENTURE • 1 PLAYER
Does it top the original? The jury's still out.

RETURN FIRE
TIME WARNER • ACTION • 1–2 PLAYERS
Excellent two player military action/strategy.

REVOLUTION X
ACCLAIM • LIGHT-GUN BLAST • 1–2 PLAYERS
Endorsed by Aerosmith, say no more.

RISE OF THE ROBOTS 2
MIRAGE • BEAT-'EM-UP • 1–2 PLAYERS
The epitome of poor gameplay.

RIDGE RACER
NAMCO • RACER • 1 PLAYER
The perfect arcade experience in your home.

RIDGE RACER REVOLUTION
NAMCO • RACER • 1–2 PLAYERS
New tracks and cars make this an almost essential purchase.

RIOT
PSYGNOSIS • FUTURE SPORTS • 1–2 PLAYERS
One of the first attempts at a *Speedball 2* clone. It failed though.

RIVEN
ACCLAIM • POINT 'N' CLICK • 1 PLAYERS
The follow up to the ever popular *Myst*.

RISK
HASBRO • WAR • 1 PLAYER
More boring wargaming. *C&C* rules!

ROBOTRON X
GTI • SHOOT-'EM-UP • 1–2 PLAYERS
Shoot robots in this classic but flawed arcade game.

ROBO PIT
T•HQ • BEAT-'EM-UP • 1–2 PLAYERS
Wasted robot fighting action.

ROAD RASH
EA • RACER • 1–2 PLAYERS
Mega Drive classic falls at the first hurdle.

ROSCO MCQUEEN
SONY • PLATFORMER • 1 PLAYER
Very, very repetitive platformer.

S

SAN FRANCISCO RUSH
GT INTERACTIVE • RACER • 1–4 PLAYERS
Worst racer on the system.

S.C.A.R.S
UBI SOFT • RACING/COMBAT • 1–4 PLAYERS
Could do a lot worse than this.

SAMPRAS EXTREME
CODEMASTERS • TENNIS • 1–4 PLAYERS
Decent tennis licence.

SAMURAI SHOWDOWN III
SONY • BEAT-'EM-UP • 1–2 PLAYERS
Why is this only available on rental? Hmm...

SENTIENT
PSYGNOSIS • ADVENTURE • 1 PLAYER
The novel ideas don't save this patched together title.

SHADOW MASTER
PSYGNOSIS • SHOOT-'EM-UP • 1 PLAYER
Pretty but boring first-person blaster.

SHELLSHOCK
EA • SHOOT-'EM-UP • 1 PLAYER
Pretty but boring first-person blaster.

SIM CITY 2000
MAXIS • STRATEGY • 1 PLAYER
Low grade Battle Tank clone.

SKELETON WARRIOR
NIGHTMARE • BEAT-'EM-UP • 1–2 PLAYERS
Should have stayed in the coffin.

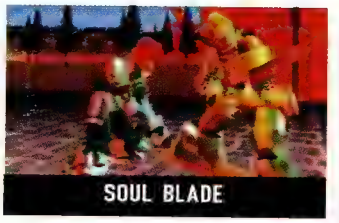
RED ALERT

RESIDENT EVIL

SENTIENT

SHADOW MASTER

SKULL MONKEYS


SOUL BLADE

SPEEDSTER

STREET FIGHTER EX

SKULL MONKEYS
EA • PLATFORMER • 1 PLAYER
Claymation is fun for a while but it won't last.

SMASH COURT TENNIS
NAMCO • TENNIS • 1–4 PLAYERS
The best tennis sim on the PlayStation.

SNOW RACER '98
OCEAN • WINTER SPORTS • 1–2 PLAYERS
This snow-based game doesn't top the classic *Coolboarders 2*.

SOUL BLADE
NAMCO • BEAT-'EM-UP • 1–2 PLAYERS
The pretender to the beat-'em-up throne.

SOVIET STRIKE
EA • SHOOT-'EM-UP • 1 PLAYER
Commy scum get chopper-launched lead up their asses. Cool.

SPACE HULK
EA • STRATEGY • 1 PLAYER
An attempt to add strategy to a 3D blaster.

SPAWN: THE ETERNAL
SONY • ACTION ADV. • 1 PLAYER
Terrible, sparse platform cum beat-'em-up.

SPEED KING
KONAMI • RACER • 1–2 PLAYER
Unexciting Wipeout rip-off.

SPIDER
BMG • PLATFORMER • 1 PLAYER
Pretty, fun and challenging platformer.

SPOT GOES TO HOLLYWOOD
VIRGIN • PLATFORM • 1 PLAYER
Spot loses it in the 32-bit world.

STAR GLADIATOR
CAPCOM • BEAT-'EM-UP • 1–2 PLAYERS
There are far better alternatives out there.

STARS WARS: MOTK
VIRGIN • BEAT-'EM-UP • 1–2 PLAYERS
Playable, if only for the Star Wars characters.

STEEL REIGN
SONY • SHOOT-'EM-UP • 1–2 PLAYERS
Big tanks and explosions don't always keep people interested.

SPEEDSTER
PSYGNOSIS • RACER • 1–4 PLAYERS
Top down racing in a serious fashion.

STARFIGHTER 3000
TELSTAR • SHOOT-'EM-UP • 1 PLAYER
3D shoot-'em-up, let down by dodgy visuals.

STARWINDER
MINDSCAPE • RACER • 1–2 PLAYER
Pretty but boring futuristic racer.

STREET FIGHTER ALPHA
VIRGIN • BEAT-'EM-UP • 1–2 PLAYERS
Street Fighter...

STREET FIGHTER ALPHA 2
VIRGIN • BEAT-'EM-UP • 1–2 PLAYERS
More *Street Fighter...*

STREET FIGHTER COLLECTION
VIRGIN • BEAT-'EM-UP • 1–2 PLAYERS
Yet more *Street Fighter...*

STREET FIGHTER EX
VIRGIN • BEAT-'EM-UP • 1–2 PLAYERS
You guessed it...but with a cool polygon twist.

STREET FIGHTER THE MOVIE
ACCLAIM • BEAT-'EM-UP • 1–2 PLAYERS
Wees on the series' good name.

STEEL HARBINGER
MINDSCAPE • SHOOT-'EM-UP • 1 PLAYER
Like *Loaded*. But worse.

STREET RACER
UBISOFT • RACER • 1–8 PLAYER
Multiplayer racing action that doesn't deliver.

STRIKER '96
TIME WARNER • FOOTY • 1–2 PLAYERS
Too fast and some glaring flaws.

STRIKEPOINT
ELITE • HELICOPTER SIM • 1 PLAYER
Inferior *Strike* style action.

SUIKODEN
KONAMI • RPG • 1 PLAYER
Deep and original RPG

SUPER FOOTBALL CHAMP
MINDSCAPE • FOOTBALL • 1–4 PLAYER
Are they havin' a laugh?

SUPER PANG
OCEAN • RETRO • 1 PLAYER
Still playable arcade remake.

SUPER PUZZLE FIGHTER 2 TURBO
VIRGIN • PUZZLER • 1–2 PLAYERS
Street Fighter characters on a puzzle game tip.

SUPERSONIC RACERS
MINDSCAPE • RACER • 1–2 PLAYERS
Surpassed by the excellent *Circuit Breakers*.

SWAGMAN
EIDOS • ADVENTURE • 1 PLAYER
Totally average adventure.

SYNDICATE WARS
EA • ACTION/STRATEGY • 1–4 PLAYERS
Excellent update of Bullfrog's classic game.

TEKKEN
NAMCO • BEAT-'EM-UP • 1–2 PLAYERS
Tekken...

TEKKEN 2
NAMCO • BEAT-'EM-UP • 1–2 PLAYERS
More *Tekken...*

TEKKEN 3
SONY • BEAT-'EM-UP • 1–2 PLAYERS
The best *Tekken*, buy it.

TEMPEST X3
INTERPLAY • SHOOT-'EM-UP • 1–2 PLAYERS
Psychedelic wireframe shoot-'em-up. Cwazy.

TENCHU
ACTIVISION • NINJA SIM. • 1 PLAYER
A little short but still a great blood-soaked title..

TENKA
PSYGNOSIS • DOOM CLONE • 1 PLAYER
Inferior *Doom* clone.

TENNIS ARENA
UBI-SOFT • TENNIS SIM • 1–2 PLAYER
Competent sports sim.

TEN PIN ALLEY
EA • BOWLIN' SIM • 1 –4 PLAYERs
Surprisingly good fun.

TETRIS PLUS
JVC • PUZZLE • 1–2 PLAYERS
We defy you to put it down.

TETRIS X
JVC • PUZZLE • 1–4 PLAYERS
Now with added four player fun!

TEST DRIVE 4
EA • RACER • 1–2 PLAYERS
Superb with a steering wheel.

TEST DRIVE OFF ROAD
EA • RACER • 1–2 PLAYERS
Let down by terrible visuals.

THE KING OF FIGHTERS
SONY • BEAT-'EM-UP • 1–2 PLAYERS
More rental fighting. Guess why.

THE LAST REPORT
LDA • POINT'N'CLICK • 1 PLAYER
Uninspired adventure.

THE LOST WORLD
EA • PLATFORMER • 1 PLAYER
Nice looking but poor playing.

THE NOTE
SUNSOFT • RPG • 1 PLAYER
A 3D RPG that falls flat on its face very early on.

THEME HOSPITAL
EA • STRATEGY • 1 PLAYER
Odd but entertaining.

THEME PARK
EA • STRATEGY • 1 PLAYER
Complex run your own business sim.

THREE LIONS
BMG • FOOTBALL SIM • 1–2 PLAYERS
Competent but flawed World Cup bandwagon game.

TIGER SHARK
GT • SHOOT-'EM-UP • 1 PLAYER
Basic 3D blaster.

TIME COMMANDO
EA • ADVENTURE • 1 PLAYER
Early attempt at 3D adventure.

TIME CRISIS
SONY • LIGHT GUN • 1 PLAYER
Alongside *Point Blank*, this is the best light gun game out there.

TILT
EA • PINBALL • 1 PLAYER
Class pinball action.

TOHAL NO. 1
SONY • BEAT-'EM-UP • 1–2 PLAYERS
Good but not as addictive as the *Tekken* series.

TOCA: TOURING CAR
CODEMASTERS • RACER • 1–2 PLAYERS
Only second to *GT*.

TOKYO HIGHWAY BATTLE
THQ • RACER • 1 PLAYER
Boring-ish racer.

TOMB RAIDER
EIDOS • ADVENTURE • 1 PLAYER
Lara's debut adventure rocked the world...

TOMB RAIDER II
EIDOS • ADVENTURE • 1 PLAYER
...her sequel however, went ballistic.

TOTAL DRIVIN'
OCEAN • RACER • 1–4 PLAYERS
Competent racer backed up by a great soundtrack.

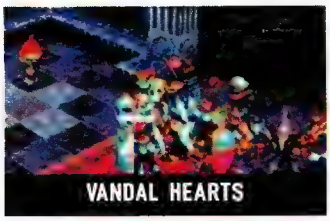
TOTAL ECLIPSE
BMG • 3D SHOOT-'EM-UP • 1 PLAYER
Poor, visuals, sound and gameplay.

TEKKEN 2

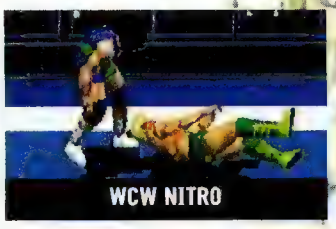
TIGER SHARK

TOKYO HIGHWAY BATTLE

TOMB RAIDER II


VANDAL HEARTS

WARCRAFT


WCW NITRO

WIPEOUT

TOTAL NBA
SONY • BASKETBALL SIM • 1–8 PLAYERS
Class b-ball game.

TOTAL NBA '96
SONY • BASKETBALL SIM • 1–4 PLAYERS
One of the best basketball games around.

TOTAL NBA '97
SONY • BASKETBALL SIM • 1–4 PLAYERS
Looks better but doesn't play as well as the previous title.

TRACK & FIELD
KONAMI • ATHLETICS • 1–4 PLAYERS
Button bashing mayhem.

TRANSPORT TYCOON
OCEAN • STRATEGY • 1 PLAYER
Not as good as *Sim City* but trying.

TRASH IT
GT • PLATFORM • 1–4 PLAYERS
A big NO to this attempt at a puzzler crossed with platforming.

TREASURES OF THE DEEP
SONY • SHOOT-'EM-UP • 1 PLAYER
Lush underwater epic.

TRUE PINBALL
OCEAN • PINBALL • 1 PLAYER
The choice of either two or three dimensional play doesn't hide mediocre gameplay.

TUNNEL B1
OCEAN • SHOOT-'EM-UP • 1 PLAYER
Great graphics don't hide the poor gameplay.

TWISTED METAL
SONY • RACER • 1–2 PLAYERS
Driving and guns. We like.

TWISTED METAL 2
SONY • RACER • 1–2 PLAYERS
More driving and more guns. We like more.

U

ULTIMATE PARODIUS
KONAMI • SHOOT-'EM-UP • 1 PLAYER
Odd 2D shooter.

V

V-BALL
FUNSOFT • VOLLEYBALL SIM • 1–2 PLAYERS
Enjoyable volleyball romp.

V TENNIS
ACCLAIM • SPORTS SIM • 1–2 PLAYERS
Pretty pathetic attempt.

V-RALLY
OCEAN • RACER • 1–4 PLAYERS
Originally the best rally game but there's a new kid on the block, called Colin...

VANDAL HEARTS
KONAMI • RPG • 1 PLAYER
RPG and combat mixed together well.

VICTORY BOXING
JVC • BOXING • 1–2 PLAYERS
Cool blend of action and training.

VICTORY BOXING 2
JVC • BOXING • 1–2 PLAYERS
Not as good as the original.

VIRTUAL POOL
INTERPLAY • SPORTS SIM • 1–2 PLAYERS
We'd rather play in the pub.

VIRTUAL GOLF
CORE • GOLF SIM • 1–4 PLAYERS
Looking dated next to *Actua Golf 2*.

VMX RACING
FUNSOFT • RACER • 1–2 PLAYERS
Never really hits the mark.

VS
THQ • BEAT-'EM-UP • 1–2 PLAYERS
Cool characters, crud gameplay.

VR BASEBALL
INTERPLAY • BASEBALL SIM • 1–2 PLAYERS
Nice visuals still don't hide the fact that baseball is tedious.

W

WAR GODS
GT • BEAT-'EM-UP • 1–2 PLAYERS
Fully 3D but sticky gameplay lets it down.

WARCRAFT 2
EA • STRATEGY • 1 PLAYER
Takes *C&C* back to the Middle Ages.

WARHAMMER
MINDSCAPE • STRATEGY • 1 PLAYER
Deep *C&C* style action.

WARHAWK
SONY • SHOOT-'EM-UP • 1 PLAYER
One of the first PlayStation games but it hasn't gone the distance.

WAYNE GRETSKY'S HOCKEY
GT • ICE HOCKEY • 1–2 PLAYERS
Not as good as *NHL '98* but nice all the same.

WCW NITRO
THQ • WRESTLING • 1–2 PLAYERS
Why are all wrestling games crap?

WCW VS THE WORLD
THQ • WRESTLING • 1–2 PLAYERS
See above. Only a little better.

WILD 9
SHINY • PLATFORMER • 1 PLAYER
Original, violent and highly entertaining.

WILD ARMS
SONY • RPG • 1 PLAYER
Uninspiring effort, lacking in mainstream appeal.

WING COMMANDER 3
EA • SHOOT-'EM-UP • 1 PLAYER
This flight sim just doesn't have the gameplay.

WING COMMANDER 4
EA • SHOOT-'EM-UP • 1 PLAYER
Good story-line but again, that boring gameplay rears its ugly head.

WIPEOUT
PSYGNOSIS • RACER • 1–2 PLAYERS
Impressive but very tough techno racer.

WIPEOUT 2097
PSYGNOSIS • RACER • 1–2 PLAYERS
With the challenge turned down, *Wipeout* rules.

WORMS
OCEAN • STRATEGY • 1–4 PLAYERS
Strategy fest involving wriggly things and bazookas. Addictive as hell.

WING OVER
JVC • SHOOT-'EM-UP • 1–2 PLAYERS
Decent arcade flight sim.

WORLD CUP '98
EA SPORTS • FOOTBALL SIM • 1–4 PLAYERS
The best football game available.

WORLD CUP GOLF
OCEAN • GOLF • 1–2 PLAYERS
Extremely poor golf sim.

WORLD LEAGUE BASKETBALL
MINDSCAPE • SPORTS SIM • 1–4 PLAYERS
Average basketball sim.

WORLD LEAGUE SOCCER
EIDOS • FOOTY • 1–4 PLAYERS
Superb but never noticed for some reason.

WWF IN YOUR HOUSE
ACCLAIM • WRESTLING • 1–2 PLAYERS
No more wrestling games, please.

WWF WRESTLEMANIA
ACCLAIM • WRESTLING • 1–2 PLAYERS
Why can't they release just one sub-standard game of the most pathetic 'sport' around.

WRECKING CREW
TELSTAR • RACER • 1–2 PLAYERS
Underrated speedy cartoon racer.

X

X2
OCEAN • STRATEGY • 1 PLAYER
Deep alien strategy. Absorbing.

X-COM: ENEMY UNKNOWN
MICROPROSE • STRATEGY • 1 PLAYER
Deep alien strategy. Absorbing.

X-COM: TFTD
MICROPROSE • STRATEGY • 1 PLAYER
More alien strategy. Just as absorbing too.

X-MEN: COTA
ACCLAIM • BEAT-'EM UP • 1–2 PLAYERS
2D beat-'em-up in the *Street Fighter* mould.

XEVIOUS 3D/G+
SONY • SHOOT-'EM-UP • 1–2 PLAYERS
3D update of classic blaster that doesn't quite work

Y

YUSHA
JVC • FIGHTER • 1–2 PLAYERS
All the usual beat-'em-up business. Nothing special.

Z

Z
SONY • ACTION/STRATEGY • 1 PLAYER
Wannabe *C&C* that's nowhere near as good.

ZERO DIVIDE
OCEAN • BEAT-'EM-UP • 1–2 PLAYERS
Poor attempt at a futuristic beat-'em-up.

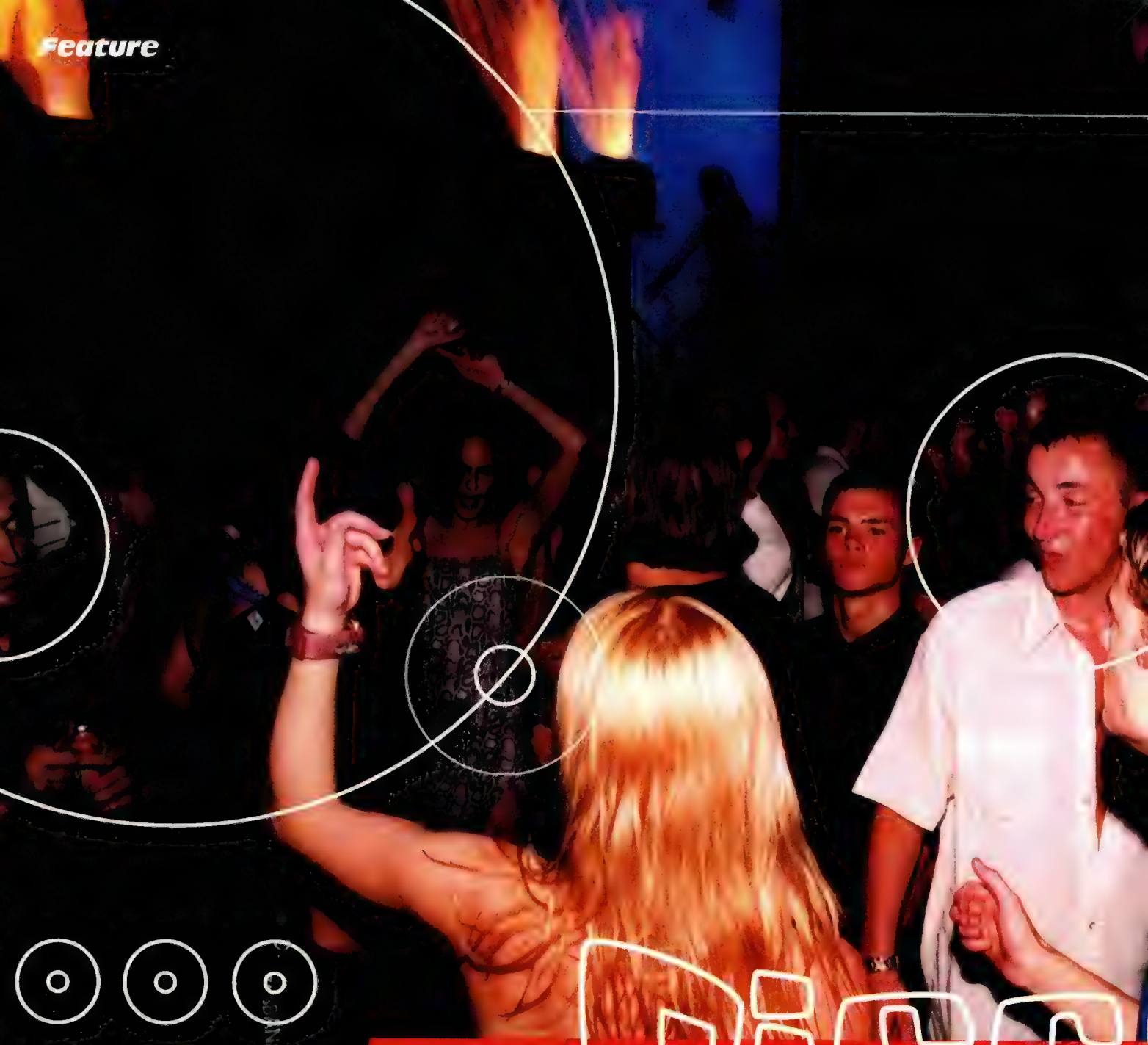
Amen!

WING COMMANDER IV

WIPEOUT 2097

WORLD CUP '98

X-MEN COTA



Disc

Discotamination

"Everybody wants to
everybody wants to be

- DE LA SOUL, THREE IS THE MAGIC NUMBER

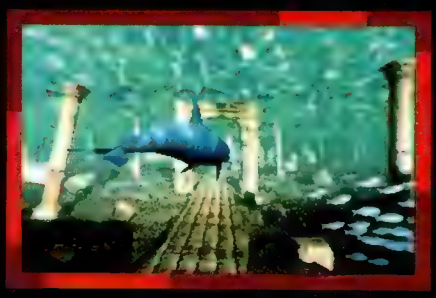
THE IMMORTAL WORDS OF DAISY AGE HIP-HOPPERS DE LA SOUL HAVE NEVER BEEN MORE TRUE THAN THEY ARE TODAY. AND, THANKS TO THE PLAYSTATION REVOLUTION, IT SEEMS THAT CONSOLE OWNERS ARE ONE STEP CLOSER TO POP STARDOM THAN THEY HAVE EVER BEEN BEFORE.

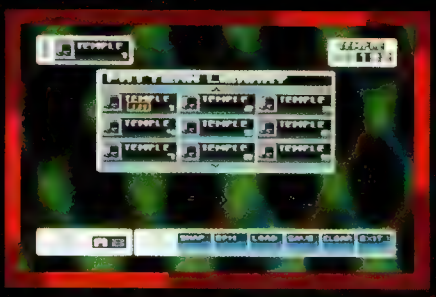
Discotamination

Discotamination

Discotamination

be a DJ, an MC"





A funny thing happened a little over three years ago. Sony, a world-wide renowned electronics group, but an unknown quantity in the videogame universe released the PlayStation to an eager band of UK gamers. Little did they know though, that videogaming, once the sole regime of teens and pre-teens, would soon become an entertainment epidemic the likes of which had never been seen before. A games machine was about to become cool.

PlayStations appeared in clubs, respected underground DJ's and pop stars alike would talk about their favourite games, lifestyle and music magazines would carry PlayStation related articles and games reviews. The PlayStation had become one of the most important influences on Western youth culture in the nineties, and Sony, frankly, were down with the kidz on the street. Game music immediately started to reflect another great Western cultural past time of the nineties, clubbing, and before we knew it, the soundtrack to Saturday nights at Cream and the Ministry of Sound was heard pumping out of the latest console releases. Vice Versa, PlayStations could be found in clubs like Cream and the Ministry of sound. Clubbers all over the country could now play the PlayStation whilst listening to the latest tunes in all the swankiest clubs.

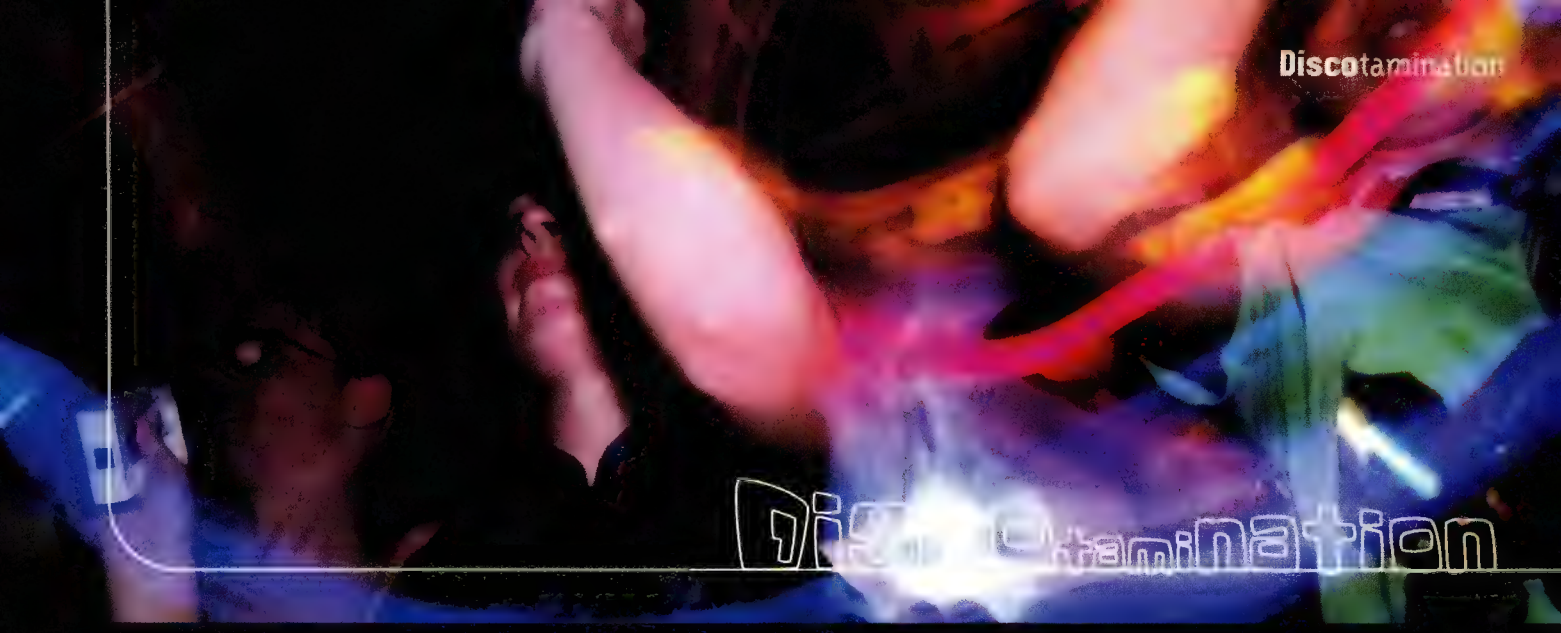
Jump forward a couple of years and things haven't changed on the game soundtrack front. We're still constantly treated (or subjected depending on your stance) to game music ranging from hardcore and drum & bass to house and techno, with all points in between duly covered. It seems that repetitive beats have finally won the war and given a hefty two fingered salute to those that tried to quash the incessant bpm of the early nineties. Anyway, a new type of game has slowly filtered onto the PlayStation in the last year or so, where instead of simply providing an aural background, the music is actually the protagonist, the most important part of the game.

Parappa The Rapper opened the doors for music games when it became a unique and innovative hit for Sony. At first, the idea of hitting the buttons to sing along with a crew of flat, two dimensional characters wasn't exactly thrilling, but after a few minutes of play, that blend of quirky Japanese hip-hop and pop entwined itself in the audio receptacles of your brain. A new star was born at the hands of a few well-timed button presses, and Sony knew that they were onto a good thing.

Since *Parappa*, we've been treated to a slew of music games, all developed or published by Sony. Problem is, just because a game is based around music, it doesn't mean instant success. The buzz caused by Sony's *Fluid* (known as *Depth* in Japan) is a good case to cite. On first hearing of the new Cubase (PC-based music production suite) for the PlayStation, we began to get excited that at last the PlayStation was to be utilised for something other than games. It was however, a bit optimistic to claim that *Fluid* was a serious music program a la Cubase. As more news on *Fluid* arrived it turned out to be no more than a novelty offering, with no lasting ability or real music production values involved.

Following *Fluid* we had *Baby Universe*. It was designed to allow you to design your own visual shows to accompany your favourite music CD's. Not really a game or a real music program. And it was every bit as disappointing as the aforementioned *Fluid*.

In reaction to *Fluid*, Codemasters have entered the foray into this new music program genre with their imaginatively titled – *Music*. It promises to be everything that *Fluid* and *Baby Universe* failed to be and so far, it looks as though it's going to succeed. *Music* gives the player a deeper insight into creating dance music and the visuals to accompany it. It contains a wealth of features and hundreds of samples that can all be positioned at any point in the song. In fact, *Music* is the first music based game that is not really a game at all. A serious tool for the professional music producer it is not, but aspiring bedroom DJ's, wannabe musicians and all-round general hipsters will soon have the opportunity to get creative with their PlayStations. Who needs games anyway? S



GAME FOR A DANCE?

Studio nerdism isn't the only musical activity available on the PlayStation. You can also take part in a little MCing, strut your stuff on the dancefloor, and even learn how to scratch in a hip-hop DJ stylee. What next? Dolly Parton's Country Creator?

FLUID (Sony)

A press launch at May's messy dance music event Creamfields, and a public launch at one of the key festivals of the year, V98, rocketed Fluid directly into the public eye. It's been touted as a revolution in gaming, and everyone from lifestyle and music magazines to Saturday Morning TV have given it the thumbs up. Top DJ's and producers have also been roped in to give Fluid a little more street cred, so don't be surprised if you hear DJs Paul Oakenfold or Roger Sanchez rambling on about it, or even as reported, dropping Fluid tunes during their DJ sets. The problem with all this though, is that Fluid is crap.

Collecting sample banks as a dolphin in admittedly beautiful underwater environments is, I'm afraid, tantamount to watching paint dry on a cricket pitch. The Groove Editor section, where all the samples can be utilised, is way too basic, and although we don't expect a recording studio, a few more creative options would have been welcome. It's a shame that most of the six hundred samples provided are actually very useable, just not here. A sequel may give Sony the chance to iron out the creases in Fluid. As it stands though, your money's better spent on a second hand Casio keyboard.

BABY UNIVERSE (Sony)

Baby Universe is nothing more than an expensive light show, and not a very good one at that. You set-up and control different patterns and objects that will morph, spin and rotate to your favourite music CDs. It's specifically designed for post club and pub experiences and as such, is absolutely no use at any other time. Which is why the thirty quid price point is way too high. At fifteen it would be a worthy buy, just like buying a music CD. A free, more limited version of this, was available on PlayStation Demo One, so what Sony think they're doing with this product is anyone's guess.

BUST-A-GROOVE (Sony)

This is more like it. A music-based game that can actually be played like a game. The idea is simple; choose one of ten disco crazy characters and make them dance their heart out to the sound of some of the grooviest Japanese pop we've ever heard. Hitting button combinations in time with the music produces progressively more impressive moves, although classics such as the Windmill and Crazy Legs have sadly been left out. There's a full review on page 78 of this issue for the full low-down on this funky little number.

PARRAPA THE RAPPER (Sony)

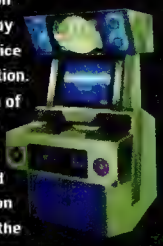
The original PlayStation music game is still as playable today as it ever was. The combination of cer-azy cardboard cut-out style characters and obscure pre-teen hip-hop makes Parrapa one of the best music games to date. Parrapa The Rapper 2 is currently in development, so expect more cartoon style hippety-hop sometime next year.

SPICEWORLD (Sony)

It doesn't matter how good Spiceworld actually is because it will still sell, regardless. As it happens though, the adventures of Scary, Sporty & co. are actually quite playable. Okay, so it's designed for your kid sister, but there's nothing stopping you having a quick go is there? It's not simply a game though; as well as remixing the girls biggest tracks and choreographing dance moves for them, you also get to watch a glut of interviews and videos of the band. And for all those who needed counselling after Fatty, sorry, Geri left, you'll be glad to hear that she is in the game.

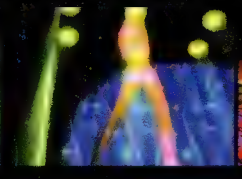
BEATMANIA (Konami forthcoming)

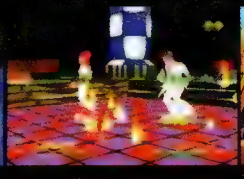
Beatmania started life in the arcades of Japan but is on its way to the PlayStation courtesy of Konami. The idea of the game is to scratch a specially designed record deck-style controller in time with the music. Of course, this causes a problem with the PlayStation which Konami and ASCII have solved, by designing the same sort of scratch device seen in the arcades for the PlayStation. We've yet to play the PlayStation version of Beatmix (which is actually based on the arcade's sequel), so we can't pass judgement on its scratch-based gameplay. We'll let you know just as soon as we get our nimble little hands on the scratchadelic preview version.



GREAT HITS (Enix forthcoming)

This one's even further away than *Beatmix*, and at the moment a UK release is looking unlikely. Still, it looks as though it'll do the business in the East. You take the role of a music video director who's job is to manage the production of a promo video. Everything from finding the star to managing the budget and hiring the equipment is in your hands . If Enix's success with *Bust-a-Groove* is anything to go by, Great Hits could possibly reach the number one spot, mate.





Making Sweet Music

Sony failed to create the definitive music production program for the PlayStation. It's Codemasters' turn now though, and we reckon they've cracked it, even though there's no Flipper...

Music

Publisher: **Codemasters**

Developer: **Jester Interactive**

Release Date: **November '98**

Game Type: **Music Production**

PAL Percentage Complete **80%**

The Early Verdict

Music: For

Music production can be an extremely difficult task, but studio virgins will have no problems at all with getting to grips with Music. A more experienced person can dive straight in at the deep end though, with the inclusion of some excellent effects and a vital riff editor.

Music: Against

Dance music may well be the most popular music in the UK right now, but even so, people who aren't into this sound will not enjoy making it. Also, there are some niggling little production oversights with Music, that will hopefully be sorted by the time it hits the shelves.

Anticipation Rating 55%

I can't wait to get my hands on a finished version of Music. Hopefully it'll be the same situation for any dedicated dance music fan. As for mass appeal, I don't think so.

Concept Description

Take the complex music software programs available on PC and Mac, and compress them into one use-able and enjoyable package for PlayStation owners.

No frills, no gimmicks and definitely no dolphins. By taking this stance, Jester Interactive (the first outside production team Codemasters have ever used) may just have started a revolution on the PlayStation. Music is the first PlayStation disc that does not (shock horror!?) contain a game, but instead an application program.

Codemasters have gone out on a limb by not trying to dress up their music writing/sequencing program as a game. When they've come up with something as accessible as Music though, there really is no need for any kind of novelty factor.

Pumpin'

Music is essentially a complete dance music workstation crammed into one disc. Everything you need to start making tracks is available from the word go. This alleviates the problem of having to spend upwards of a grand to start making music by buying your own equipment, which let's face it, is pie in the sky for many wannabe producers. It does have its limitations though, so don't expect to be sending your latest remixes to Sony music, expecting a number one slot within weeks, or winging your way up to London to get a hot dub-plate cut.

Do expect however, to be astounded by the quality of what can be created within an hour of starting up, and how easy it is to get the basics of a storming club number, or a chill-out snooze-athon into the sequencer, and blasting out of the speakers. The problem with *Fluid* was that right from the top, it was a little daunting. Having to find the samples before you can access them was a ridiculous idea because all we wanted to do was get down and make some quality tuneage. Something which is simple in Music, because all of the samples are ready to go at all times.

Bangin'

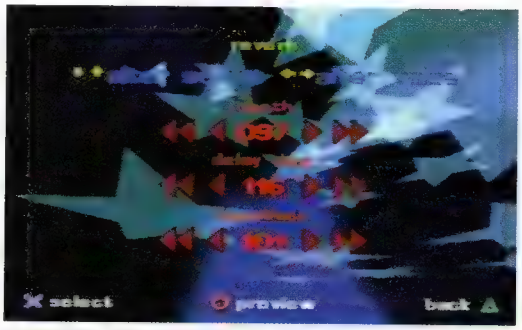
Everything from intricate breakbeats and drum loops to simple organ stabs and accapellas can be utilised to create your own piece of dance music, and with over 750 different samples to choose from, it should be a long time before you get bored with them. The biggest difference between Music and *Fluid* though, is that with Music you can actually create your own riffs and drum loops from the samples on the disc. On top of this there is also an extensive effects section which gives you the opportunity to edit separate samples and make them sound different from the original. All of these features give Music the depth that *Fluid* could not achieve, which is quite ironic when *Fluid* was originally to be called *Depth*. Hmm.

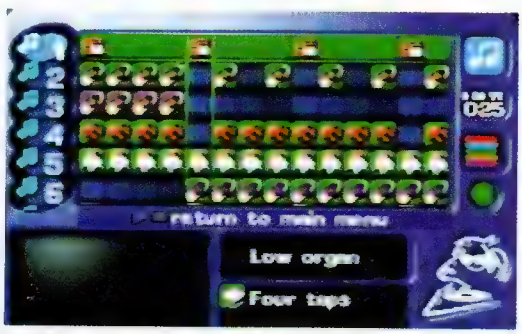
Largin'

Of course, a little bit of talent and a good ear for sound wouldn't go amiss when using Music, because nothing is done for you. When you start a new song, you're faced with a blank grid that needs to be filled with funky breaks, banging kick drums and hands in the air moments. How do you go about this though? Well, simply select your samples from the library and place them onto the 4/4 bar grid. An icon for each sample denotes when it will play in the song. This could become tiresome if you had to place samples one by one for a whole song but thankfully, a cut and paste option is available so that you can copy whole chunks of music at a time.

We've only had the chance to play around with an early preview version of Music, yet we're already completely addicted to what is destined to be the most creative PlayStation utility around. Okay, you may not be a fan of dance music and you may never have had the inclination to make your own music. But for those of you that love dance music, but have never known how to make it, or had the opportunity to indulge in a little production yourselves, Music promises to be what you've been waiting for.

"Essentially a complete dance music workstation crammed into one disc."





FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: Music utilises the PlayStation's existing reverb chambers that can be found in the CD player installed on the machine. Luckily you have the ability to copy whole blocks of music. This makes creating tracks much more manageable, and stress free.

INTERVIEW WITH COLD STORAGE OF JESTER INTERACTIVE.

31 year old Tim Wright, AKA Cold Storage has produced music for more games than he can remember, or at least cares to remember. He's been a game programmer, a freelance composer and a full time musician but his latest job is to oversee the design process of Music. Station tracked him down to ask some questions of a topical nature.

1. How long has Music been in development?

From the concept stage, Music has been around now for about 14 months, and we've been burning the midnight oil for most of that time!

2. Why did you choose to deal solely with dance music and no other genres?

Dance music and electronic music is generally created using samplers and computer sequencers, so this was seen as the most likely target genre. Also, PlayStation owners tend to be into either dance/club music or some other type of electronic music. This isn't to say that Music isn't capable of producing songs in other styles.

3. How did you go about creating the different samples?

All the musical samples were created in my studio at the Jester Interactive H.Q. here in Liverpool. I used a variety of keyboards and effects units and the odd guitar to produce the sounds available on the Music CD. The rapping and singing vocals were recorded exclusively for Music at a recording studio in London. In fact, if you check out the credits for the vocals, you'll spot some famous names!
Uniquely, we are encouraging people to use the samples from Music in any of their projects, professional or otherwise, free of charge. All they have to do is acknowledge that the samples were taken from 'Music' and also let us know who they are, and what the samples are being used for.

4. Is this the first program of its type for Jester, or do you have experience in music programs for other formats?

The team here at Jester Interactive is a very experienced one. We have all been in the games industry for many years, and in that time we've worked on numerous projects. I've personally written music for more games titles than I can remember.

5. Do you plan to create any add-on sample disks?

We do have some plans, but ideally we want to get as much feedback as possible from the people who buy Music. Then we can decide what kind of samples people would like to see future discs. These discs will not only contain extra sound samples, they'll have more video, more pre-written music and music style examples.

6. What do you think of the PlayStation as a serious music making tool or even as an extra device that DJ's could utilise?

The PlayStation has extremely capable sound hardware. 24 channels of audio using a compressed format that allows us to get an amazing amount of sample data into the machine, and the fact that it has built-in reverb is also a great boon. We've mastered songs to CD from the PlayStation and we've been really impressed at the sound quality and lack of noise. The quality really is on a par with professional music equipment.
What's really exciting is because of the new lower UK price-point for the PlayStation itself, there is a genuine opportunity to make credible music for under £150. When you compare that to the price of getting a keyboard, a sampler and a computer to run them, it all looks extremely attractive.

From a music and video point of view, it's going to be a productive tool for even the most professional of DJs, especially as the PlayStation is already a fixed feature in most clubs. If a DJ wants to do a 'Music' set, all they'll have to bring along to the club is a Memory card with their music or video on!

7. Which artists/DJ's would you like to see endorsing Music?

I can tell you now that we've had a great response already from some of the top dance/techno artists in the UK about this product, and we're in the process of demo-ing it to them. We've also got some great feedback from DJs.

8. Do you think that there is a possibility of somebody creating a sampler for the PlayStation? Could it work or is the PlayStation too limited to deal with this type of hardware?

Hmmm? don't know how much I should say about this (wink!). Let's see what happens in the future shall we?

9. Was Music created with a certain type of person in mind or have you tried to make it accessible for everyone?

Music was born out of the idea that everyone should have the chance to write their own music. So to make it easy, the product can be used in different ways. You can load in music and video that's been created by us here at Jester Interactive and see how we've done it. You can re-mix these, and then clear everything out and write your own songs, either by using musical building blocks, or note-by-note when you feel more comfortable with the product.

One of the guys in the office has a little girl still at primary school, and she got to grips with Music straight away, knocking out some kicking house tunes! At the other end of the scale, I've had some of my professional musician friends creating songs with Music, and they are seriously impressed with all the advanced features available.

10. These days PlayStations can be found in clubs forging stronger links with gaming and music. How do you see the future?

I think PlayStation has a great future in the clubs for a good few years to come. We're going to be strengthening these ties by doing club related events with Music.

We are also looking into setting up a facility whereby Music users can send us their memory cards and we'll press their songs to CD for them and send it to back them along with their Memory card. So everyone will be able to have their own CD album to play in the car or on their hi-fi! S

Station

Your monthly handle on the changing face of PlayStation gaming

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Tekken 4 to launch PlayStation 2?

Sony's offensive against the forthcoming Sega Dreamcast has begun. The once market leading gaming giant's last ditch attempt at console domination is due for launch in Japan at the end of the year. The Dreamcast has already attracted much praise and consumer attention, with pre-release sales totals impressively high.

Wanting to reap some of the Sega machine's limelight, Sony's usual tight-lipped approach to their much hyped PlayStation 2, working title T-Rex, appears to be slackening. Whispers and rumours indicating that Sony's close unity with arcade giants Namco, a partnership that has strengthened the market dominance of the PlayStation beyond any other format, will again play an integral role in the launch of the new hardware. Preliminary reports indicate that the main board consists of a 128 bit processor, likely to be the G12 chip from LSI. Additional features include Internet access via a built in modem and compatibility with DVD, although no indication has been made that software will be based upon these high storage discs.

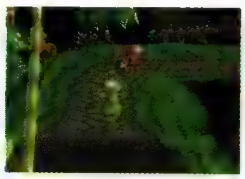
Harking back to the original unveiling at the 1994 Tokyo Gameshow, with a PSX development unit running an arcade perfect translation of Namco's seminal *Ridge Racer* and its obvious influence upon the unfaltering success of the platform, the duo hope to rekindle this magic upon the T-Rex, with the respective unveiling of both the hardware and Namco's home version of *Tekken 4*.

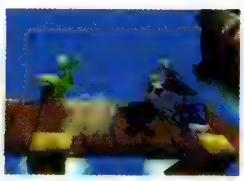
This fourth entry to the seminal beat-'em-up series is rumoured to use Namco's new arcade boards, whose architecture will be compatible with the T-Rex, making any home conversions extremely simple. An official announcement is expected within the next month, with pundits suggesting Sony will take to the air waves the day before the Japanese release of the Dreamcast, finally providing confirmation of this exciting development.

Croc casts off

Fox Interactive's pioneering 3D platform adventure, *Croc* set the standard for the genre's next generation PlayStation titles. Aimed squarely at the youth end of the market, the game's blend of retro gameplay and 3D visuals promoted mainstream success.

Riding in on the massive sales of the original comes Croc 2, another dose of 3D platform fun for all ages. Due for release early next year, the game continues right where the last adventure left off. Having saved his world, Croc goes off in search of his parents, and many platform antics unfold. With all new locations to explore and enemies to battle, Croc 2 looks sure to take an equally huge bite of the market this time round.



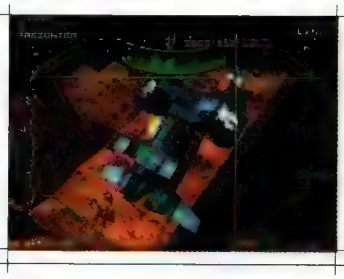


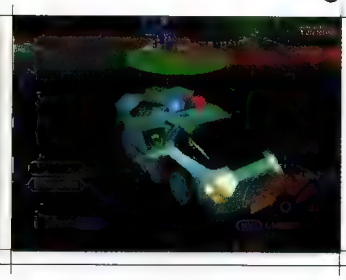
BETA ZONE

TITLE: G-POLICE 2
PUBLISHER: PSYGNOSIS
RELEASE: MARCH '99

Psygnosis' critically acclaimed Blade Runner-inspired shoot-'em-up, *G-Police* swoops into the sequel zone this spring. With 30 new missions and an enhanced graphics engine, the G-Police now have access to both land- and air-based vehicles, alongside CPU controlled back-up and ground forces.

Supported by full voiceover and FMV sequences, the future noir world of crime once more needs a saviour.





iNFO

Smurfing Around

Infogrames have announced that their new release schedule will feature the first next-generation appearance of those annoying little blue Dutch chaps, the Smurfs. The fellas will be appearing in a platform adventure from the same team behind Lucky Luke.

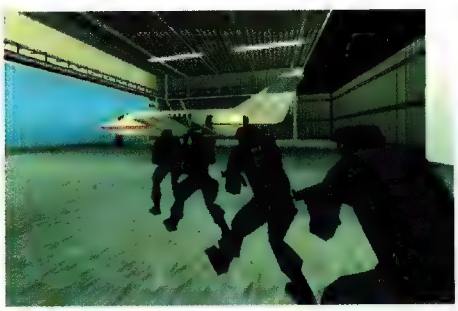
Is it a bird?

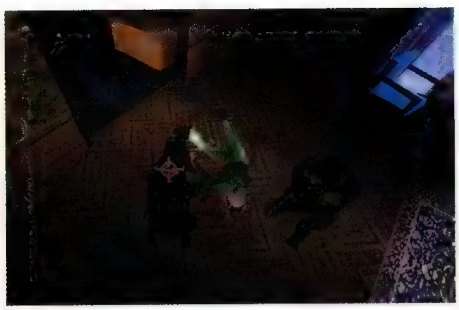
Titus Software have turned their loyalties away from the N64 camp for the moment, and are planning to release a PlayStation conversion of Superman. Little is known about the project, although the visuals mirror that of the new Warner Bros cartoon and not the movies.

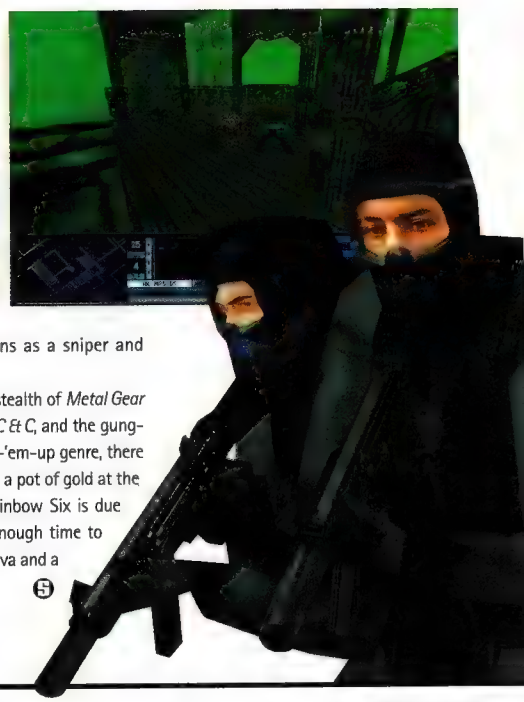
T–Rex backward compatible

The latest rumour to do the rounds concerning Sony's PlayStation 2 (dubbed the T-Rex), is that the multi-million dollar company plan to make the hardware backward compatible, allowing the potential buyer access to all currently available PlayStation software. Let's hope it's true.

Rainbow Six prepares for battle







The unexpectedly massive PC strategy/action hit, Rainbow Six is poised to lay siege to your favourite console. Based upon Tom (Hunt for Red October) Clancy's new novel, the game places the player in command of a covert operations team, waging unseen warfare upon various terrorist organisations. The hybrid of genre styles and ideas sent the title to the top of the PC charts. Its gameplay, borrowing from such diverse areas as *Command and Conquer*, *Goldeneye* and *Metal Gear Solid*, makes for an intense and highly rewarding experience.

Currently in development from Take 2, the game will again use the blend of strategy and blasting, yet the PlayStation code will not simply retread the PC code. Producers Red Storm promise not just a port, but instead an all-new game, featuring such inclusions as a sniper and night vision modes.

Fusing the style and stealth of *Metal Gear Solid*, the complexity of *C & C*, and the gung-ho tradition of the shoot-'em-up genre, there will much more than just a pot of gold at the end of this Rainbow. Rainbow Six is due out in March '99, just enough time to get out and buy a balaclava and a machine gun.

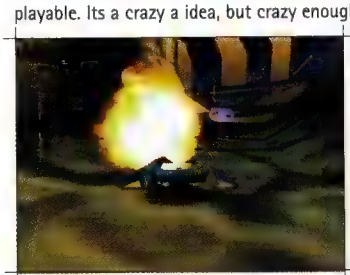
TITLE: PACMAN 3D
PUBLISHER: NAMCO
RELEASE: QUARTER 2 '99

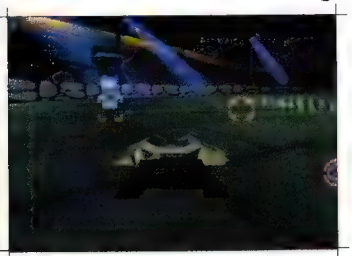
Struck by numerous delays and production problems, Namco's 3D re-invention of their classic pill-chomping hero has almost reached completion. Pacman 3D drops the little yellow fella into a rich texture mapped 3D world, where his eating skills will be put to the ultimate test.

By maintaining the classic gameplay that helped Pac become a legend, Namco promise this outing will not disappoint.

TITLE: DODGEM ARENA
PUBLISHER: BLACK FRIAR
RELEASE: JANUARY '99

PC developer Black Friar's first foray into the PlayStation market is the futuristic sports sim, Dodgem Arena. The lush visuals and presentation shell serve to promote the game well, with the gameplay borrowing elements from Wipeout and ice hockey. The future sports simulation has not faired well in the PlayStation marketplace, yet Black Friar are optimistic that Dodgem Arena could very well break with tradition and actually be rather playable. Its a crazy a idea, but crazy enough to work.





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Resident Evil movie

Subject to numerous rumours and in most cases blind speculation, Station can bring you the only, repeat only, confirmed details concerning the big screen incarnation of Capcom's Resident Evil. The movie is currently budgeted at an average $60 million, and zombie king George Romero has been confirmed as director.

EA Squares off

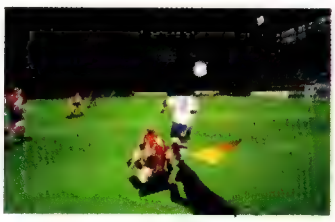
The weakening link between Sony and Squaresoft has been dealt another blow with confirmation that Electronic Arts have signed publishing rights to Final Fantasy VIII in the US. Although the rights remain unsigned for the European release, they are currently pencilled for 3Q.

Return to the Warzone

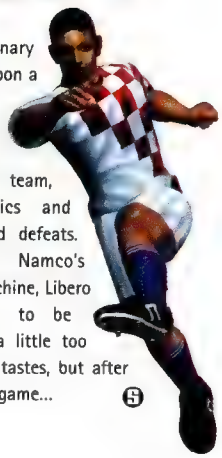
The success of Acclaim's grappling epic, WWF Warzone has prompted the company to commence work upon a follow-up. Featuring new characters, moves and visuals, the new game will again carry the official endorsement of the World Wrestling Foundation, and all the lyrca clad maniacs we have come to love.

Namco's soccer shocker

Sony/Namco's first foray into the world of football, Libero Grande, has a unique element that sets it aside from the myriad of titles that invade the PlayStation turf. Unlike every title that comes to mind, the player is limited to the control of only a single player, a right-sided midfielder. Although he is granted complete freedom to assume any position the play requires, control cannot be switched to another team mate, a first for contemporary football sims.



This revolutionary approach calling upon a unique style of gameplay means the player must work as part of a team, using new tactics and strategies to avoid defeats. Converted from Namco's obscure arcade machine, Libero Grande sets out to be different. Sounds a little too different for some tastes, but after all, it's a funny old game...



Sweet Nothings

This month's nuggets from the world of PR speak:

"All new elements have been designed to give the game more depth and the player more satisfaction"

CORE DESIGN: TOMB RAIDER III.

"Got more fifties kitsch than a bus full of Jarvis impersonators. You'll find yourself dancing to the soundtrack in no time."

PURE ENTERTAINMENT: RAT ATTACK

"Players can pick up the game in seconds yet spend months mastering the depth and challenge."

SCI: LIVE WIRE

"A multiplayer turn-based strategy game that delivers everything imaginable with hundreds of hours of gameplay."

ASCII: MASTER OF MONSTERS

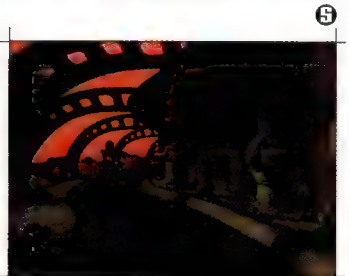
TITLE: X GAMES PRO BOARDER
PUBLISHER: SONY
RELEASE: MARCH '99

With the snowboarding craze in no danger of subsiding, the latest title to hit the slopes, X Games Pro Boarder, hails from a rather unlikely partnership - Jackie Chan's new best mates, Radical Entertainment and the mighty Disney Interactive.

The gameplay echoes Ocean's *Snow Racer*, allowing the player complete freedom to ride the mountain at will. Featuring a soundtrack from indie freaks Foo Fighters and Lunatic Calm, this will have snowboarders filling their baggy pants.

TITLE: UNIFICATION: MARTIAN GOTHIC
PUBLISHER: TELSTAR
RELEASE: QUARTER 3 '99

One of the few highlights of the recent ECTS show, was Telstar's stunning 3D sci-fi/horror romp, Unification: Martian Gothic (working title). Set in a vast Mars research station, the player must solve the riddle of the missing crew members. Similar in style to *Resident Evil* with an injection of John Carpenter's The Thing, the claustrophobic action is depicted using polygon characters upon pre-rendered backgrounds. This sounds absolutely fantastic. Updates to follow.



Climb any mountain

Codemasters again turn their hand to new areas of videogaming, moving on from armchair DJs and rally driving to mountain bike racing. No Fear Downhill Mountain Biking is scheduled for release in 1Q. This simulation of the lycra-rubbing sport is a first for any system, and given their previous success with sporting games, hopes are high.

Thrill Kill canned

Electronic Arts' Thrill Kill has been officially dropped from their release schedule. Having purchased the rights of the title from previous owners Virgin Interactive, the game has been shelved due to its violent content, which was deemed "not appropriate for the market". Boo, hiss. Check out next issue, for further details of this now lost classic.

Indy's big adventure

Indiana Jones is set to make a comeback in LucusArt's forthcoming 3D adventure romp, Indiana Jones and the Infernal Machine. The original tomb raider will appear sometime during Q3, '99. Could Lara have some competition on her hands? Look for more details in the following months.

R4: RIDGE RACER FOURTH EDITION UPDATE

After breaking the news of the latest instalment of the PlayStation's *Ridge Racer* series last issue, we couldn't resist returning for another sneaky look. Further to these premier shots, new gameplay details have also come to light, the options screen will make room for a Real Racing '99 mode, similar in structure to a Grand Prix simulation. The teams having been based upon the original rival vehicles from *Ridge Racer*, including the Pac Racing Club, Racing Club Mappy and Dig Racing Team.

These new screenshots, and the continuing press announcements for the news hungry masses, can only hint at the monster Namco are preparing to uncage.

TECH BITS

DIABLO PAD

PRODUCED BY: Nu-Gen
PRICE: £6.99
RATING: Poor

Garish transparent joypad, rather unresponsive and lacking in weight. Obviously designed to cater for the youthful end of the market, the links to Satanism are also a little concerning. Avoid and save your soul.

BIOGRIP

PRODUCED BY: Joytech
PRICE: £19.99
RATING: Good

Flight sim perfection, a tough little fella that is both very responsive and comfortable to use. The joystick is a little tough to master in genres outside of the flight simulation, but fans of these games could do a lot worse than this.

CONSOLE TIDY CABINET

PRODUCED BY: Commeer Services Ltd
PRICE: £29.99
RATING: Pricey

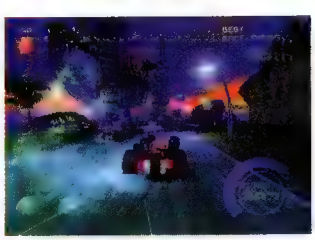
If you are in need of somewhere to put your portable telly, PlayStation, joypads, magazines and some games, look no further than this very expensive D.I.Y. Sunday afternoon 'put point 2 into hole 2' construction.

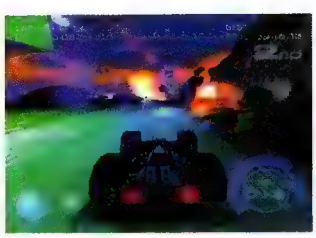
FAZOR

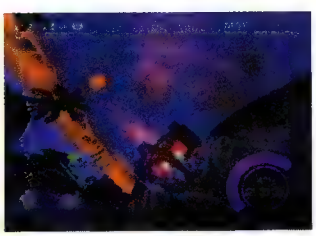
PRODUCED BY: Mad Catz
PRICE: Import Only
RATING: Bizarre

The Mad Catz Fazor is compatible with all PlayStation shooting games, including G-Con 45, featuring side and front buttons and rapid fire options. Perfect for the Star Trek fan.

Psygnosis roll with it







Media-plagued Liverpool publishers Psygnosis return to the genre that helped establish them as one of the leading developers in the early days of the PlayStation. Their proposed trip to the tarmac, Rollcage, offers much more than an average speedburst and dose of road rage. Replacing the limitations of the track with a pseudo free-roaming approach places no confines upon the racer or the track itself.

The vehicles reach such speeds that their momentum allows them to travel upon the sides of buildings, tunnel roofs or simply over one another. Adding to the frantic style, players can retrieve numerous weapons, from those littering the track, and set about blowing up pretty much anything that gets in their way. Buildings can be toppled, creating makeshift roadblocks, bridges can be destroyed and opponents can be sent to meet their makers, all with a push of a button.

The game features eleven single-player tracks in four unique offworld racing environments, where the varying levels of alien gravity and conditions combine to add to the unique racing style.

A rollercoaster ride that demands control, timing and most importantly, a very strong stomach. Promising gameplay, original concept and a completely overblown sense of style - sounds like a winner!

"Rollcage is nothing less than the fastest, most explosive and outrageous game on wheels."
Jonathan Fargher: PR Executive Pysgnosis

Cats and Rats

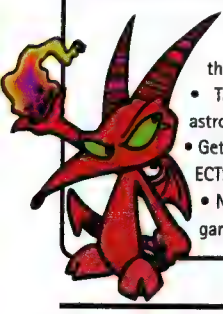
The good, the bad and the plain old shite events that have respectively filled us with glee or stuck a sharp stick somewhere very painful during the last four weeks.

The Cats

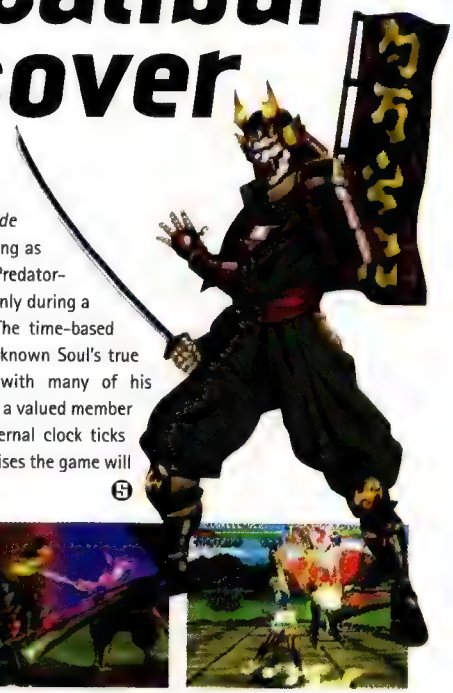
- Those hard-working models that helped promote the games at this year's ECTS, it was high noon on our sundials.
- Crystal Dynamic's *Soul Reaver*, Kain, is back - and we can't wait to get reacquainted.
- Free beer always tastes much sweeter - PR people, we love you all!
- The boss man Mr Perry for discovering some artistic pictures of Nell "Lara Croft" McAndrew, phew!
- The Picture House Cinema for showing Enter The Dragon - Bruce on the big screen, what could be better?
- Jon from Psygnosis and Mark Ward of Bastion for some very dodgy internet connected activities. Disgusting but amusing.
- Konami and Gremlin for making sure that next issue you receive exclusive demos of *Metal Gear Solid* and *Actua Soccer 3*.
- Fat Boy Slim for making the drive to London almost bearable.
- Finishing the second issue of the magazine no-one thought would happen!

The Rats

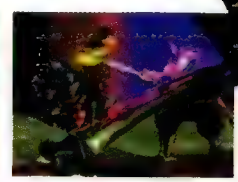
- Missing the opportunity to meet Shannon Lee, a dragon we'd love to enter.
- *Thrill Kill* for slipping down the release date ladder.
- Jackie Chan Vs Bruce Willis, James and Dave - please stop this.
- Eidos' brilliant *UnHoly War* for eating into our drinking time.
- Sony's *Fifth Element*, it must have been hard work to make the game even worse than the movie.
- Talking with a bad cockney accent after seeing the astronomically cool Lock, Stock and Two Smoking Barrels.
- Getting very hot and sweaty but for all the wrong reasons during ECTS; open some windows next year, please.
- No playable code available for *Jackie Chan's Stuntmaster*, the game starring a man who would definitely kick Bruce Willis' arse.



Tekken/ Soul Calibur crossover



Tekken's cyber-samurai Yoshimitsu makes a guest appearance in Namco's *Soul Blade* sequel, Soul Calibur. Originally appearing as the "Unknown Soul" hidden under a Predator-like cloaking shield, he was available only during a single-player bout as an opponent. The time-based character release has revealed the Unknown Soul's true identity, Yoshimitsu. He is graced with many of his trademark *Tekken* moves, making Yoshi a valued member of the character rankings. As the internal clock ticks onward, who knows what further surprises the game will reveal? Keep watching the arcades...



GRAN TURISMO 2 LATEST NEWS

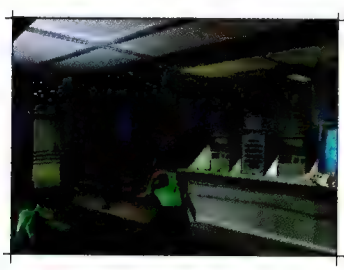
One of our many industry spies has reported that the developers of *Gran Turismo* are in negotiations with Ferrari. If the deal is a success, Ferrari's new F50 seems the most likely inclusion to help pack the garage of the masterful racing title. Also, in light of the massive and unpredicted popularity of Codemaster's *Colin McRae Rally*, rumours suggests that GT2 will feature a rally mode alongside its more traditional road-based antics.

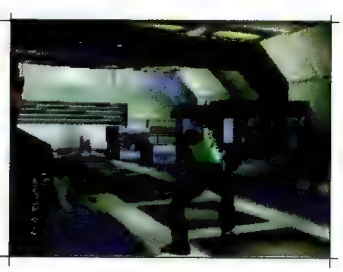
Any further developments? You'll see them here first!

TITLE: SABOTEUR
PUBLISHER: EIDOS
RELEASE: 2ND QUARTER '99

Armed only with a katana sword and loyal pooch, the player will embark upon an adventure spanning five worlds, their objective to overthrow the Evil Corporation.

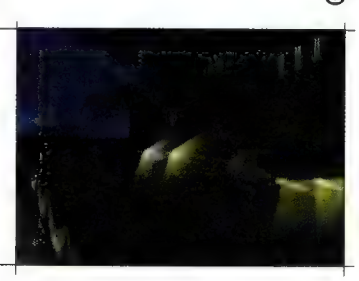
Eidos' Saboteur is another action adventure romp to add to the company's impressive CV. A pure exercise in action, the player must kill or be killed. With a large choice of weapons, an army to defeat and excessive levels of violence, one is hard pressed not to be a little excited by this prospect.





TITLE: C3 RACING
PUBLISHER: INFOGRAMES
RELEASE: DECEMBER '98

From the makers of *Total Drivin'*, and the producers of *V-Rally* comes C3 Racing. Race upon 30 tracks, crossing five continents upon varying terrain, in 20 of the world's finest automobiles. Offical endorsements hailing from such top end manufacturers as Toyota and Mitsubishi, as well as a new 3D game engine that promises to wipe the floor with their previous racers, makes C3 a high performance release. Placing the title in good stead with the serious competition already on the shelves.



EYE CANDY

Core blimey, it's Witchblade

With Lara Croft making a guest appearance in her comic book, Top Cow's gun-toting heroine Witchblade is having the favour returned by Core Design, with the busty babe winning a starring role in her own 3D adventure. Currently in the early stages of coding, little has been released concerning the title. But if the marketing men get their teeth stuck into this project, expect to see much, much more of Witchblade in the coming months. Just remember where you saw her first.

"We are working closely with CORE to make sure this game will be their best yet, and a great success for our initial videogame release."

Tim Hernandez: Top Cow Comics

Inside

The more serious face of the PlayStation marketplace...

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Eidos say no to Psygnosis and no to N64– for now...

Speculation and rumours about the future still haunt Liverpool-based publishing house Psygnosis. Eidos have been the latest name to be associated with them, but it seems that no immediate takeover is planned.

Despite speculation that Psygnosis were set to become the latest addition to Eidos' trophy cabinet, it seems that the deal that many thought would go through during the past month is now off. As a result, both Sony and Psygnosis have confirmed that there are no imminent changes in the company's status planned for the immediate future.

Psygnosis were one of the leading developers for Sony's console at launch, but in recent months they have become a tricky company for the Japanese electronics giants to come to terms with, thanks to the nature of their multi-format product catalogue. Neither side are said to be comfortable with the paradoxical situation of a multi-format publisher being owned by a format manufacturer.

Former Psygnosis boss Ian Hetherington told the trade press last month that the situation appeared to come to a head at this year's E3. "When the Psygnosis stand was erected and there was such a significant and strong N64 presence, I believe the situation became untenable," he said.

Managing Director Gary Johnson told staff at the company that Psygnosis had been taken of the market and made this statement to trade paper CTW:

"Psygnosis' focus continues to be the creation of core, big game titles across a variety of formats, wherever these can be profitable and successful. In line with this strategy we have refocused our catalogue in development for FY 1999/2000. This has resulted in the loss of two secondary projects, *Control Freak* and *Reapers* in our San Francisco studio, and the redundancy of around 40 members of staff involved in these projects. Psygnosis remains an independent multi-format publisher within the Sony group, with the full backing of our parent company."

It is thought that Eidos have decided not to pursue the acquisition of the company any further due to a dispute over Sony's valuation of the company and a fear of damaging their corporate focus in this important last quarter of the year.

Eidos have also decided to drop the release of *Fighting Force* on the N64 in a very public and damning show of no confidence in the Nintendo console and its business model in Europe. Stating that their main commitment for the foreseeable future would be to the PlayStation, Eidos will however be releasing Michael Owen endorsed *World League Soccer* on the N64 early next year.

European Computer Trade Show– everyone's a winner

Despite concern from various areas of the games industry, the European Computer Trade Show continues to go from strength. However, this year Nintendo walked away with many of the accolades.

The attendance figures for ECTS are usually a pretty good barometer of the health and wealth of the European games community, and this year's show once again broke all records. The figure of 21,297 beat last year's record total of 20,140 by almost six per cent. With over 55 countries represented at the three-day event, it was an impressive show of faith by the industry, and one that was welcomed by organisers Miller Freeman.

Surprisingly though, it was Nintendo who stole the show at the ECTS Interactive Award ceremony, held at Chelsea Football Club and hosted by comedian Jack Dee.

Predictably, the gong for Best Console went to Sony for PlayStation, but Nintendo scooped the Game of the Year Console award for *Goldeneye 007*. Nintendo also beat Sony to the titles of Publisher of the Year, and Developer of the Year, thanks to *Goldeneye 007* and *Banjo-Kazooie* creator Rare.

Activision quash Infogrames buy out rumours

Activision had their party spoilt a little recently following rumours of a take-over bid by French software giant Infogrames

Activision had only just completed a publishing and distribution deal with LucasArts, covering the UK and selected European territories, when rumours of an acquisition attempt by the French company started spreading through the games industry.

Activision's European senior vice-president Bob Dewar, and Infogrames boss Bruno Bonnell both reacted in spectacular style to the gossipmongers with the rumour being dismissed as "bullshit" by Bonnell.

"There were so many rumours going around," fumed an angry Dewar, "It just soured the whole LucasArts deal. This deal is the single most important thing that I have done since joining the company. We are in a position now where we would be acquirers and we are not available to be acquired. That is our mission statement. But who would we acquire? There are very few opportunities out there from a publishing standpoint. Perhaps with developers, there are opportunities there. The thing I admire about LucasArts is their loyalty to their partners like Rushware in Germany and Ubi Soft in France. I want the Activision office to be LucasArts' base in Europe and I want them to feel that they are welcome to use it anytime. The two single biggest deals we've done are the Centresoft acquisition and the LucasArts deal. But if we had not acquired Centresoft in the UK then I don't think LucasArts would have even spoken to us."

Activision have also recently signed up the rights Toy Story II on PlayStation and PC and several classic Disney film properties.

European senior vice-president Bob Dewar

Tekken 3 fails to impress

Namco's eagerly awaited PAL release of the brilliant Tekken 3 receives a disappointing reception at retail.

Despite all the build up and hype, sales of Sony's Tekken 3 proved to be disappointingly low during its first few weeks of release. Although the technically impressive beat-'em-up went straight in at number one in the All Formats, PlayStation and Console chart on release, with first week sales in excess of 35,000 copies, many retailers have complained that customers have not exactly been breaking the door down to purchase the triple-A title. *Resident Evil 2* shifted just over 59,000 units in its first week whilst *Gran Turismo* sold slightly over 44,000.

The reason cited generally seems to be that the big gap between the title's overseas release and its UK on-sale date has allowed too many grey imports and pirate copies of the game to seep into the marketplace, meaning that the majority of fans of the series in this territory will already have acquired a copy of the game, or will at least have played on one. Also, the adverse press the title has received over the lack of speed in the PAL conversion may have proved more damaging than at first anticipated. "Sales have been very poor," confirmed Andrea Lightfoot of the Pudsey Computer Shop, Leeds. "I think maybe it's because the game has been out as an import title for a long time. The feedback we are getting from customers is that import copies have been on the market for ages so they have already seen the game."

And while Iain Brimecome, owner of The Pink Planet Games Exchange in Weston-Super-Mare, said that sales had been better than anticipated, he conceded that grey copies were taking their toll. "We shifted 60 units in the first week so we were pleasantly surprised," he said. "But sales haven't been as huge as say, *Gran Turismo*, or *Resident Evil 2*.

The problem is that grey imports have been available since Christmas, so people have already played the game. It's a great quality title but it took too long to receive a PAL release. Sony was obviously saving it for the Christmas market, but they have ended up shooting themselves in the foot."

Bart Saunt, multimedia manager at Virgin Retail quoted in the trade press: "We had a great start with it, but it's not performed exactly as expected and I think you'll find that's the case with a lot of retailers. The problem is that there was a big window between the Japanese and UK release dates."

Hasbro take a new shape

All change at Hasbro as they begin to re-define their business and development models for the year ahead.

Having completed a $70 million (£42 million) acquisition of MicroProse, Hasbro have begun restructuring their organisation, with about 60 jobs are expected to be cut in all, with most coming from MicroProse's sales, marketing and administration departments in the US, where Hasbro is strong. In the UK, MicroProse's development team and a few other staffers will remain at the company's Chipping Sodbury offices. But sales, marketing and other departments will be moved to Hasbro's offices in Uxbridge or a location nearby. Barry Jafrato, who held the title of managing director of Hasbro Interactive, has now been promoted to Senior Vice President in charge of global business development.

Tim Christian, Managing Director

MicroProse's Tim Christian, now Managing Director, International, for Hasbro Interactive, is currently overseeing the consolidation of the companies and says that Hasbro Interactive's four labels would each have clearly-defined product ranges. MicroProse and Avalon Hill will carry strategy and simulation games, family titles will come out under the Hasbro label, while the Atari label will carry action games and re-issued Atari product.

There are also new children's and budget lines planned, but whether or not they will have their own branding is still under discussion. "This acquisition is an incredible opportunity to combine the complementary talents of MicroProse and Hasbro Interactive, our leading entertainment software publisher," said Alan Hassenfeld, chairman and chief executive officer of Hasbro, Inc. "MicroProse will significantly enhance Hasbro Interactive in three key strategic growth areas: brands and content, R&D assets and European distribution."

Tom Dusenberry, president of Hasbro Interactive, added: "MicroProse will provide Hasbro Interactive with product strength in the strategy, simulation and 3D action game categories, enabling us to compete in virtually all major PC game categories. We also look forward to taking these great games to new platforms, including the Sony PlayStation, Nintendo 64 and Sega Dreamcast."

THIS COULD BE VIDEOGAMES MAGA

EXCLUSIVE!
METAL GEAR SOLID DEMO

Meet the most talked about game in the world, in the flesh!

EXCLUSIVE!
ACTUA SOCCER 3 DEMO

Play the biggest soccer smash of the year so far!

EXCLUSIVE NEVER BEFORE SEEN!
VIRTUAL LARA CROFT DEMO

Lara talks as we bring you footage for the first time of Virtual Lara in a world mega babe exclusive.

EXCLUSIVE!
ACTUA TENNIS DEMO

A smashing chance to net a playable demo of this out-of-season sports sim.

ALSO
TOMB RAIDER III PLAYABLE DEMO

Play with Lara to your heart's content in the comfort of your own home.

ACTUA SOCCER 2 PLAYABLE DEMO

Your chance to compare the old with the new.

THE GREATEST ZINE OF ALL—TIME!

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WE'LL SEE YOU THEN!

Taking Control

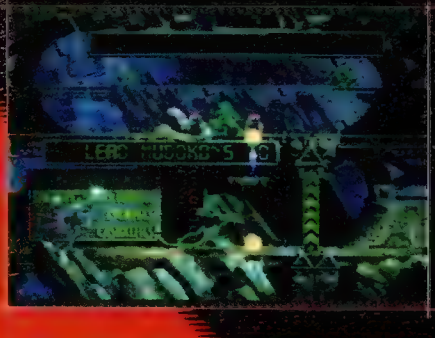
Abe's Exoddus/Oddysee

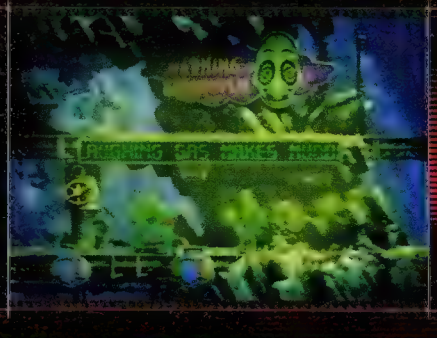
There's a good portion of each game's first level which should keep most of you foxed for a good while yet, especially if you've never played an Abe game before. If you are an Abe's virgin it may take you a while to get used to the "Gamespeak", but don't worry, you should have a hoot trying out all the different phrases anyway.

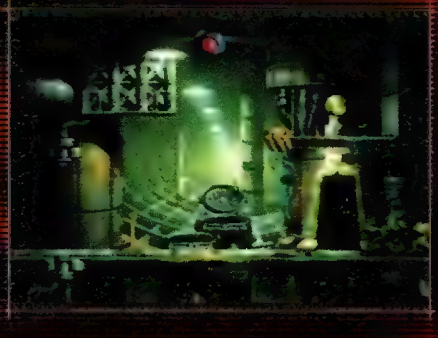
CONTROLS

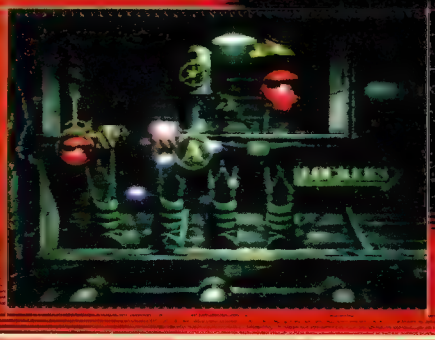
Walk →
Sneak + →
Run + →
Jump ↑ or ⊙
Run jump + → + ⊙
Crouch ↓
Action ⊡
Throw ⊙ + direction
Fart ⊙

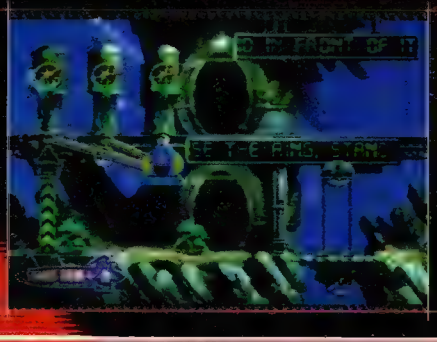
Gamespeak Hold or and press any button for different phrases.

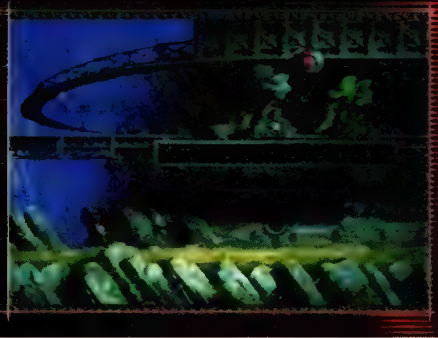












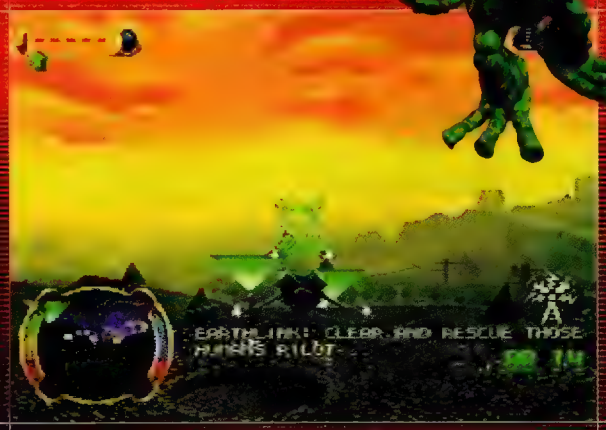
If you are going to get the most out of your STATION Demo CD, you are going to have to know how to play the games featured on it. These two pages include all the controls you'll need to master Abe's Exoddus, Abe's Odyssee, B–Movie and Dead Ball Zone.

B–Movie

Take control of your 1950's prediction of what a spaceship may well be and shoot some flying saucers. You'll need an itchy trigger finger and, uh these controls:

CONTROLS

Left – ←
Right – →
Thrust forward – ⊗
Thrust back – A
Fire weapon – ⊙
Change weapon –
Fire suck-o-matic – ⊙
Change suck-o-matic –
Strafe – and
Incoming messages –



Dead Ball Zone

If you're of a placid nature, be prepared to be shocked at the ultra-violence of Dead Ball Zone. Headbutts, piledrivers and plenty of hardware are all here to make your opponent wince. Just don't forget to score some goals too!

CONTROLS

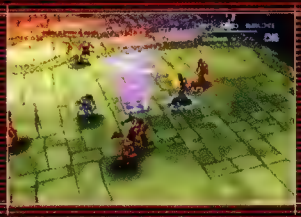
When in Possession of the ball:

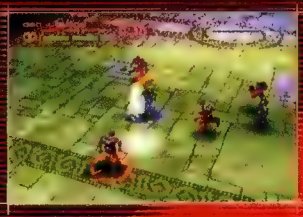
Pass ⊙
Shoot ⊗
Turbo
After-touch left
After-touch right
Pass/shoot combo ⊙, ⊗
Turbo punch volley , ⊗ (Hold)
Pass Combo ⊙, ⊙
Turbo Shot (in opposition goal quarter) , ⊗

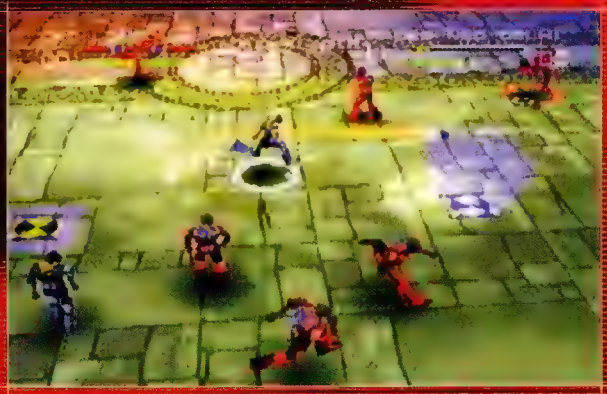
When not in possession of the ball:

Punch tackle ⊗
Rugby tackle ⊙
Player/ lock Switch

To perform any number of special moves try out different button combinations on the pad.







CHARTS AND PRICE WATCH

Here's your essential guide to this month's movers and shakers in the PlayStation market. And for those wanting hold on to a few extra pennies, our monthly Price Watch section could prove to be a life saver.

CHART TRACK	
1. TOCA TOURING CARS (PLAT.)	Codemasters
2. COLIN MCRAE RALLY	Codemasters
3. GRAN TURISMO	Sony
4. WWF WARZONE	Acclaim
5. PREMIER MANAGER '98	Gremlin
6. TOMB RAIDER (PLAT.)	Eidos
7. TOMB RAIDER II	Eidos
8. TEKKEN 2 (PLAT.)	Sony
9. WORLD CUP '98	EA Sports
10. RESIDENT EVIL 2	Virgin

BLOCKBUSTER RENTAL	
1. TEKKEN 3	Sony
2. COLIN MCRAE RALLY	Codemasters
3. WWF WARZONE	Acclaim
4. RESIDENT EVIL 2	Virgin
5. GRAN TURISMO	Sony
6. WORLD CUP '98	EA Sports
7. TOMB RAIDER (PLAT.)	Eidos
8. GRAND THEFT AUTO (PLAT.)	Take2
9. TEKKEN 2 (PLAT.)	Sony
10. SPICE WORLD	Sony

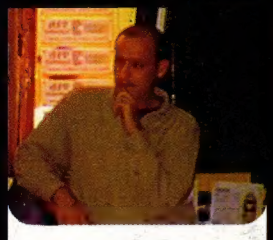
INDEPENDENT	
1. TEKKEN 3	Sony
2. WWF WARZONE	Acclaim
3. COLIN MCRAE RALLY	Codemasters
4. GRAN TURISMO	Sony
5. PREMIER MANAGER '98	Gremlin
6. TOCA TOURING CARS (PLAT.)	Codemasters
7. V–RALLY (PLAT.)	Infogrammes
8. TOMB RAIDER (PLAT.)	Eidos
9. FLUID	Sony
10. BOMBERMAN WORLD	Sony

GAME	
1. TEKKEN 3	Sony
2. COLIN MCRAE RALLY	Codemasters
3. PREMIER MANAGER '98	Gremlin
4. GRAN TURISMO	Sony
5. RESIDENT EVIL 2	Virgin
6. WWF WARZONE	Acclaim
7. BOMBERMAN WORLD	Sony
8. WORLD CUP '98	EA Sports
9. GRAND THEFT AUTO (PLAT.)	Take 2
10. POINT BLANK	Sony

PRICE WATCH	INDEPENDENT	SPECIAL RESERVE MAIL ORDER	HMV	TOYS R US
TOCA – Sony	£19.99	£16.69	£19.99	£19.97
COLIN MCRAE RALLY – Codemasters	£44.99	£36.49	£44.99	£44.97
GRAN TURISMO – Sony	£44.99	£26.59	£29.99	£29.97
WWF WARZONE – Acclaim	£44.99	£31.99	£44.99	£44.97
PREM. MANAGER '98 – Gremlin	£44.99	£29.29	£44.99	£44.97

CONSUMER WATCH

Every month we go out onto the highstreet to talk to the country's gamesplayers about their PlayStations and take a look at what they are buying now and what they will be tracking down over the next few months.

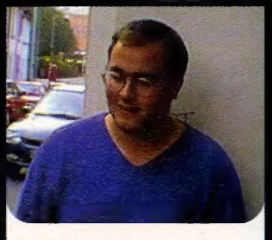


NAME: Trevor
AGE: 28
OCCUPATION: Video Games
YOUR PURCHASE: Anything I want
BUYING NEXT: *Parasite Eve*
MOST WANTED: *FFVIII*
BEST PSX TITLE YET: *FFVII*
WORST PSX TITLE: *Victory Boxing*

NAME: Ricky
AGE: 4
OCCUPATION: Child
YOUR PURCHASE: *Rage Racer*
BUYING NEXT: Diddy Kong Racing
MOST WANTED: *F1 '98*
BEST PSX TITLE YET: *F1 '98*
WORST PSX TITLE: All good

NAME: Amanda
AGE: 22
OCCUPATION: Travel Agent
YOUR PURCHASE: *Tekken 3*
BUYING NEXT: *Tomb Raider III*
MOST WANTED: *Soul Calibur*
BEST PSX TITLE YET: *Tekken 2*
WORST PSX TITLE: *Baby Universe*

NAME: Kristian
AGE: 15
OCCUPATION: School
YOUR PURCHASE: *Tekken 3*
BUYING NEXT: *Gran Turismo*
MOST WANTED: Dreamcast
BEST PSX TITLE YET: *Resident Evil 2*
WORST PSX TITLE: *Warhawk*



NAME: Jon
AGE: 24
OCCUPATION: Chelsea Fan
YOUR PURCHASE: *ISS '98*
BUYING NEXT: *FIFA '99*
MOST WANTED: *Viva Football*
BEST PSX TITLE YET: *FIFA: RTWC*
WORST PSX TITLE: *Striker*

DISCLAIMER: PLEASE NOTE THAT ALL CHART PLACINGS AND PRICES FEATURED ON THIS PAGE WERE CORRECT AT THE TIME OF GOING TO PRESS.

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PlayStation Fire Pack ... ...£116.99 less £8*

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*Deduct £8 off the price of any one item bought at the same time as a PlayStation Fire Pack. 0% PAY LATER - See below.

PlayStation + Prem Mgr 98 ...£119.99 less £10*

With Sony Dual Shock controller and RF lead PLUS Premier Manager 98 game (Reviewed at 90%)

*Deduct £10 off the price of any one item bought at the same time as a PlayStation + Premier Manager 98. 0% PAY LATER - See below.

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ACTUA GOLF 3 ... ...29.99
ACTUA SOCCER 2 95% (ANL) 17.99
ACTUA SOCCER 3 ... ...29.99
ACTUA SOCCER 94% (OPT) 14.99
ACTUA TENNIS 32.99
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ALUNDRA 90% 29.99
ARCADE GREATEST HITS 2 ... ...19.99
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ASSAULT 90% 28.99
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BLOODY ROAR (BEAST) 80% 18.99
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BRAHAMA FORCE 80% 34.99
BREATH OF FIRE 3 ... ...34.99
BRIAN LARA CRICKET 37.99
BROKEN SWORD 2 (MOUSE) 82% ...29.99
BRUNSWICK BOWLING 29.99
BUST A MOVE 2 90% 18.99
BUST A MOVE 3 86% 25.99
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CARMAGEDDON 37.99
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CHILL 82% 29.99
COLIN McRAE RALLY 34.99
COLONY WARS 2 ... ...35.99
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COMMAND & CONQUER - RED ALERT 96% (MOUSE) 33.99
COMMAND & CONQUER - RETALIATION 94% (MOUSE) 33.99
COMMAND & CONQUER - RETALIATION WITH MOUSE & MAT 94% 41.99
COOL BOARDERS 2 93% 29.99
CRASH BANDICOOT 2 94% (ANL) ...36.99
CRASH BANDICOOT 94% 18.99
CROC 90% (ANL) 18.99
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DUKE NUKEM 94% (ANL, LINK) ...23.99
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